

Two Palestinian fishermen wounded by Israeli patrol boat

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — Two Palestinian fishermen were wounded, one seriously, when an Israeli navy gunboat opened fire on their vessel off the coast of the Gaza Strip on Saturday, Palestinian sources said. A member of the Palestinian liaison committee with Israel said the shooting occurred around 7:00 a.m. off the coast of the southern Gaza Strip. The two wounded Palestinian fishermen were admitted to the Nasser Hospital in this town in the southern Gaza Strip. One was in serious condition. The Palestinian official said the fishing boat was in waters under the control of the Palestinian National Authority when the Israeli patrol boat suddenly opened fire. Israeli military sources said the patrol boat had stopped a number of Palestinian vessels in a prohibited area for identity checks and opened fire when one of them tried to flee.

Jordan Times

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Happy Easter

THE JORDAN TIMES will not be published on Monday in celebration of Easter on Sunday, April 11. The next issue will appear on April 13. The Editor and staff of the Jordan Times wish readers and advertisers a very happy Easter.

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Monarch begins tour of Arab states

King, Sultan Qaboos hold talks on Jordan-Oman ties, regional issues

By Caroline Faraj
with Agencies

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah arrived Saturday in Oman as part of a tour of Arab states aimed at bolstering ties with countries in the region, a government official said.

King Abdullah is expected to head to the United Arab Emirates on Sunday for talks with Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan, the official told the Jordan Times.

During his first stop on the Gulf tour, King Abdullah held talks with Sultan Qaboos of Oman on issues of mutual concern, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

"The two leaders reviewed Jordanian-Omani relations and means of enhancing cooperation between the two Arab states in all fields," Petra added.

The talks took place in an encampment of tents near the town of Nizwa, 170 kilometers southwest of Muscat, where Sultan Qaboos holds meetings when in the region, the Omani News Agency said.

King Abdullah, who expressed his deep appreciation for the continued support of the sultan and his government to the Kingdom, stressed the importance of "increasing cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties which are based on mutual respect."

They also reviewed Arab and regional issues, particularly the current situation of the stalled Arab-Israeli peace process.

"The two leaders stressed the importance of intensifying all efforts needed to provide utmost support to enable the Palestinians to secure their legitimate rights and establish

their independent state on their national soil," the Omani agency added.

King Abdullah and Sultan Qaboos also discussed the situation in Iraq and called for alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people and safeguarding the country's unity.

The two leaders reviewed the latest developments in Balkans and the suffering of the people of Kosovo as a result of the crisis in Yugoslavia and the displacement of the Kosovars. They expressed their deep concern and said that the present situation could have consequences on the security and the stability of the region as well as the world.

King Abdullah is accompanied by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khawli, General Intelligence Department Director Samih Batkhi, other officials and members of the Royal family.

King Abdullah's visits are part of an itinerary of visits to Arab countries that took him to Saudi Arabia last week.

Following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7, several countries, including the Gulf states, said they were ready to help the Kingdom meet upcoming challenges.

In an interview published Saturday in the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi, King Abdullah said his visit to the Gulf was not to seek donations but rather "real economic cooperation" that includes opening markets to Jordanian workers and products.

The King said his priorities are to improve ties with Arab countries and implement eco-



His Majesty King Abdullah meets with Sultan Qaboos upon his arrival in Oman on Saturday (Petra photo)

nomics to help solve Jordan's pressing problems of poverty, unemployment and economic recession.

"Economic relations will top the Jordanian agenda in all the talks that King Abdullah is expected to hold during his Arab and foreign tours," said the official.

Jordan, also grappling with a \$6.8 billion foreign debt, hopes the Gulf Arab states will employ more Jordanians to ease unemployment officially estimated at 16 per cent and unofficially at up to 27 per cent.

However, many officials fear that Jordan's educational system will be unable to turn out the specialists needed to meet the Gulf countries' needs.

"Hence, our educational system is in dire need for reform

to meet future needs and challenges," said one government official.

"We are hopeful that the outcome of the King's tour will succeed in promoting economic ties with both the governments and the private sectors in the Gulf and Arab states," said the official.

Jordan's ties with the Gulf states deteriorated after the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, and those with Syria chilled after the peace treaty with Israel was concluded in 1994.

But officials have repeatedly stressed that enhanced ties with either the Arab states or Israel would not be at the expense of relations with other countries.

"The peace [with Israel] has already been concluded... there is no going back on it," said

another senior official on condition of anonymity.

In the Al Quds Al Arabi interview, King Abdullah stressed that "relations with Israel will not at all be at the expense of ties with Arabs, especially with Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine."

Later this month, King Abdullah is expected to visit Libya, Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries before heading to Washington in mid-May for his first official trip to the United States.

Meanwhile officials have expressed their optimism over future economic relations with the UAE and Libya.

"Jordan believes that Libya and the UAE have the most stable economies in the Arab World," a senior official said.

Crown Prince, officials discuss King's visit to Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah, the Regent, on Saturday held talks at the Prime Ministry with senior officials on His Majesty King Abdullah's recent visit to Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, Prince Hamzah was briefed by acting Prime Minister Marwan Hmoud on the results of the King's trip, which aimed at strengthening and developing bilateral relations.

The Regent also was briefed on the government's plans to deal with the country's economic, water and agricultural situations, as well as efforts to combat poverty and unemployment.

Prince Hamzah praised the government for giving the utmost priority to such issues and stressed the need to implement the directives in the King's letter of designation to the government by developing comprehensive plans to meet the nation's needs.

Also attending the meeting was Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Majali.

Later on Saturday, the Regent inspected the headquarters of the Armed Forces, where he held talks with Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Kaabneh and other senior military officials.

Also Saturday, Prince Hamzah, deputising for King Abdullah, opened the sixth meeting of Arab students studying in Jordanian universities at Al Karameh Scout Camp.

During the meeting, organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and public and private universities, the Regent discussed a number of issues with the participants.

At the end of the event, attended by a number of deputies and officials, Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mamsar presented a gift to Prince Hamzah.

Gunmen kill top Iran general

TEHRAN (R) — Gunmen disguised as Tehran city street cleaners shot and killed a leading Iranian general on Saturday, in an attack claimed by the main armed opposition group.

An armed forces statement, quoted by the official IRNA News Agency, said Lieutenant General Ali Sayyad Shirazi, deputy chief of staff of the armed forces and a hero of the eight-year war with Iraq, was killed at 6:45 a.m. as he left home for work.

The statement gave no other details of how Sayyad Shirazi died or the identity of his killers, other than to brand them "mercenary terrorist elements."

However, Iranian media quoted eyewitnesses as saying Sayyad Shirazi, who had just received word of promotion to Iran's top military rank, was shot three times in the head and neck by gunmen dressed as municipal street cleaners.

The state-owned Kayhan newspaper quoted witnesses as saying the gunmen fatally wounded the general by firing into his car through the passenger window.

Sayyad Shirazi was taking his child to school on his way to work, it said.

He died in hospital from his wounds shortly after the attack.

A spokesman for the Iraq-based Mujahadeen-e Khalq organisation told Reuters in Dubai by telephone that its units had carried out the assassination in north Tehran.

"Sayyad Shirazi was killed as he was being escorted by a group of heavily armed revolutionary guards acting as his bodyguard," Ali Safavi



Lieutenant General Ali Sayyad Shirazi

said from his office in Paris.

He said Sayyad Shirazi, born in 1944, was targeted because he was "responsible for purging and executing military personnel and [was] also responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of teenagers in the unpatriotic war with Iraq."

There was no independent confirmation of the Mujahadeen claim but the killing bore all the hallmarks of the armed opposition group's operations.

Iranian officials were in no doubt that the group, blamed for a spate of similar attacks over the past year, was behind the shooting. The commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards vowed to avenge Sayyad Shirazi.

"Based on information received, the terrorist group [Mujahadeen] have claimed responsibility for the attack. The Revolutionary Guards and the army will take severe revenge," said General Rahim Safavi, commander of the elite guards.

State television quoted

President Mohammad Khatami as saying the assailants would be "punished for their act of treason."

Sayyad Shirazi's wife said he had died in the cause of Islam and the Iranian revolution.

"These elements commit such acts in a bid to destroy our Islamic government and revolution," his wife, unnamed in the report, told television.

Major General Hassan Firouzabadi, joint chief of staff, commander, sent condolences to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader and commander-in-chief of its armed forces.

Iran has witnessed several attacks on senior officials in recent months, and Sayyad Shirazi was the second to be killed in the past year.

In August, Assadollah Lajevardi, the former head of Iran's prisons, was gunned down in his shop in the Tehran bazaar. The Mujahadeen also claimed responsibility for that attack.

Last January, the head of the Tehran judiciary survived an assassination attempt by gunmen on a motorcycle, another favoured Mujahadeen tactic.

Iran has urged Western governments to curb the activities of the Mujahadeen, which has extensive operations in Europe and North America. It also maintains military bases in Iraq, near the Iranian border.

The group has recently stepped up armed actions and cross-border raids from Iraq after a period in which it unsuccessfully courted the West through political and diplomatic means.

India offers Arafat support for Palestinian state

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India fully supports the Palestinian people's "legitimate and inalienable" right to an independent state, the foreign affairs ministry said on Saturday.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, on a one-day visit, earlier held talks with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President K.R. Narayanan. A ministry statement said they underlined India's "consistent and unwavering support to the Palestinian cause."

They also "emphasised that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the

region could only be based on relevant U.N. resolutions and the principle of land for peace."

Arafat came to India as part of a world tour to garner support for the Palestinian cause and seek views on whether he should declare a sovereign state on May 4.

He has come under pressure from the international community, including the United States and Russia, to postpone the declaration at least until after Israeli elections on May 17.

The Indian statement made no mention of the May 4 date.

"India supports the Pal-

stinian people's legitimate and inalienable right to a 'homeland and was one of the first countries to recognise the state of Palestine in 1988," it said.

It said India also upheld the right of all the states in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to "coexist peacefully" within secure and internationally recognised borders.

Arafat, who arrived from Bangladesh late Friday, also met Sonia Gandhi, leader of the main opposition Congress Party.

A spokesman for the Palestinian embassy told AFP that Arafat was "bere

for consultations and to take advice whether India will support his plans to declare Palestine an independent state."

He is due to take a final decision at a meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Gaza on April 27.

The spokesman said Arafat would travel to Pakistan later Saturday and would stop over in Yemen, and possibly in some African states, before arriving in China on April 14.

During a visit to Japan on Thursday, Arafat was urged by Tokyo to delay the declaration.

Reports there said the

Palestinian leader expressed an inclination to postpone the unilateral declaration from May 4 — when an interim period of autonomy under the 1993 Oslo accord expires.

Japan warned that any declaration now could stall a U.S.-brokered accord to restart the Middle East peace process, which was signed by Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu late last year.

Netanyahu has threatened to annex the remainder of the occupied territories if Arafat declares a state outside the framework of the planned final status talks.

Clouds hamper NATO strikes; U.S. plans to send more aircraft

Russia reiterates intent to stay out of Balkans conflict; refugees airlifted to Poland, Germany

BELGRADE (Agencies) — Cloudy skies hampered NATO air raids on Yugoslavia on Saturday but the country's official news agency reported cruise missile strikes near the Kosovo capital Pristina, and the United States announced plans for a big boost in NATO air power.

Hundreds of Kosovo refugees were flown to Germany and Poland from Macedonia, where about 50 new arrivals crossed the frontier after skirting minefields and hiding in forests to evade Yugoslav security forces.

Prime Minister Tony Blair assured Britain it was under no threat from Russia, in spite of President Boris Yeltsin's warning on Friday that NATO was running the risk of drawing Moscow into its Balkan

war. The United States announced plans to send 82 more warplanes to join the NATO force bombarding Yugoslavia and said it still felt sure the West could bring Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to heel without sending ground troops into combat in Kosovo.

"We're going to persist until we prevail," said National Security Council spokesman David Leavy. "And we're confident that day by day, as we attack his military infrastructure, we can achieve our objectives."

Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon said the United States was committing 24 more F-16 fighters armed with HARM anti-radar missiles, four more tank-busting A-10

Thunderbolt attack aircraft, six radar-jamming EA-6B prowlers, 39 KC-135 and two KC-10 refuelling tanker aircraft and seven C130 transports.

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov told the Turkish daily Hurriyet that he would not allow a land offensive into Kosovo to be launched from his country, where NATO has 12,000 troops, its main ground combat force in the area.

A Cypriot envoy blamed NATO's bombing campaign for his failure to win the freedom of three U.S. servicemen captured March 31 along the Macedonian border. Spyros Kyprianou, speaker of the Cyprus parliament, returned home empty-handed Saturday after a two-day visit. U.S.

officials had pinned scant hopes on his mission.

Milosevic issued a message marking the Orthodox Easter without referring to the air strikes on his country, now in their 18th day.

"I wish a happy Easter to all citizens of Orthodox faith and I wish peace, progress and happiness to all Yugoslav citizens and to all our people," his message said.

NATO officials in Brussels said that cloud cover over Yugoslavia had scrubbed three of four bombing missions overnight and more bad weather was forecast over the weekend.

But Western ships continued to fire cruise missiles and the alliance said it has punched a huge hole in Yugoslav military resources

in its campaign to make Belgrade let a NATO-led military force protect Kosovo's ethnic Albanians.

"We have inflicted a hell of a lot of damage," said NATO spokesman Jamie Shea. "We have severely damaged about 150 major targets."

Shea said that half of Yugoslavia's MiG-29 fighters have now been destroyed.

The Yugoslav military, in a commentary carried Saturday, by the state-run Tanjug news agency, denied NATO strategy as a "fiasco." The weekly Vojiska, or Army, said Western military planners had no option but to make peace and lose credibility — or mount a ground campaign with heavy losses.

Serbian TV's transmitter at Golac near the Kosovo capital

Pristina was knocked off the air by a strike during the night, along with mobile and landline telephones in Kosovo.

Tanjug said missiles struck a railway station in the Kosovo town of Polje in the early hours and the airport at Stajina, southwest of Pristina, in the afternoon.

NATO said it had hit a microwave relay and oil production and storage depots near Pristina and at Smederevo and Valjevo near Belgrade.

In Albania more than 2,000 refugees — an entire village — streamed across the Yugoslav border overnight. They said Serb soldiers and police had forced them from their homes at gunpoint.

They were followed after daybreak by dozens of people

from two neighbouring towns who said several thousand more were on the way after Serb forces awakened them with mortar fire and gave them five minutes to get out.

Separately, about 50 people entered Macedonia around midday after walking along railway tracks to skirt Serbian minefields, they told international monitors who went to them at the Blace crossing into the former Yugoslav Republic.

Busload after busload of refugees arrived at Skopje airport to board flights for Germany. Three planes with more than 700 refugees had left by mid-afternoon.

A planeload of 60 refugees, including 34 children, also flew from Macedonia to Warsaw — the first airlift to

Poland.

Some NATO governments, including the United States and Canada, have put on hold their offers to take in thousands of the 500,000 people who have fled Kosovo since March 24 because the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR urged that refugees stay in the region if possible.

After clashes near Kosovo's western border, the Yugoslav army warned Albania on Saturday that it could not allow "terrorists" — meaning Kosovo's ethnic Albanian guerrillas — to attack from its territory without risking escalation of the war.

Albania in turn accused Yugoslavia of an unprovoked attack on border guards and villagers.

Egypt postpones verdict in trial of 107 Islamists

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian military court on Saturday postponed a session at which verdicts were due in the cases of 107 Islamists said to belong to the Jihad group.

Lawyers said the session had been rescheduled for April 18 to allow more time for deliberation among the three judges in the biggest single trial of militants since those that followed the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

Two of the judges, including court President Brigadier Ahmad Al Anwar, have not handled cases of Islamists before, defence lawyer Muotasser Al Zayyat told Reuters.

The defendants, 67 of whom are being tried in their absence, include Ayman Al Zawahiri, leader of the Jihad group and now believed to be hiding in Afghanistan along with his

associate, Saudi-born dissident Osama Ben Laden.

The accused also include several militants handed over to Egypt in recent months by Albania, Azerbaijan, Ecuador, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Jihad, which has specialised in trying to assassinate Egyptian political and security figures, vowed last month to continue its struggle to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's secular rule and turn Egypt into a strict Islamic state.

The pledge was contained in a Jihad statement issued a few days after a unilateral ceasefire announcement by Egypt's biggest militant group, Al Gamaa Al Islamiyya (Islamic group).

On March 25, Gamaa leaders in exile in Afghanistan and elsewhere announced support for the first time for a July 1997

truce called by their jailed colleagues in Egypt.

The six Gamaa leaders, imprisoned since Sadat's killing, form nearly half the group's 13-man leadership council. Its head, Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, is serving a life term in the United States for plotting to blow up New York City landmarks.

The trial of the 107 militants offers the government a chance to differentiate between Jihad and Gamaa, two that Gamaa leaders have united in favour of abandoning the armed struggle.

"They [the government] must give strong signals that they distinguish between those who have ceased fire and those who insist on continuing fighting," one Islamist source said.

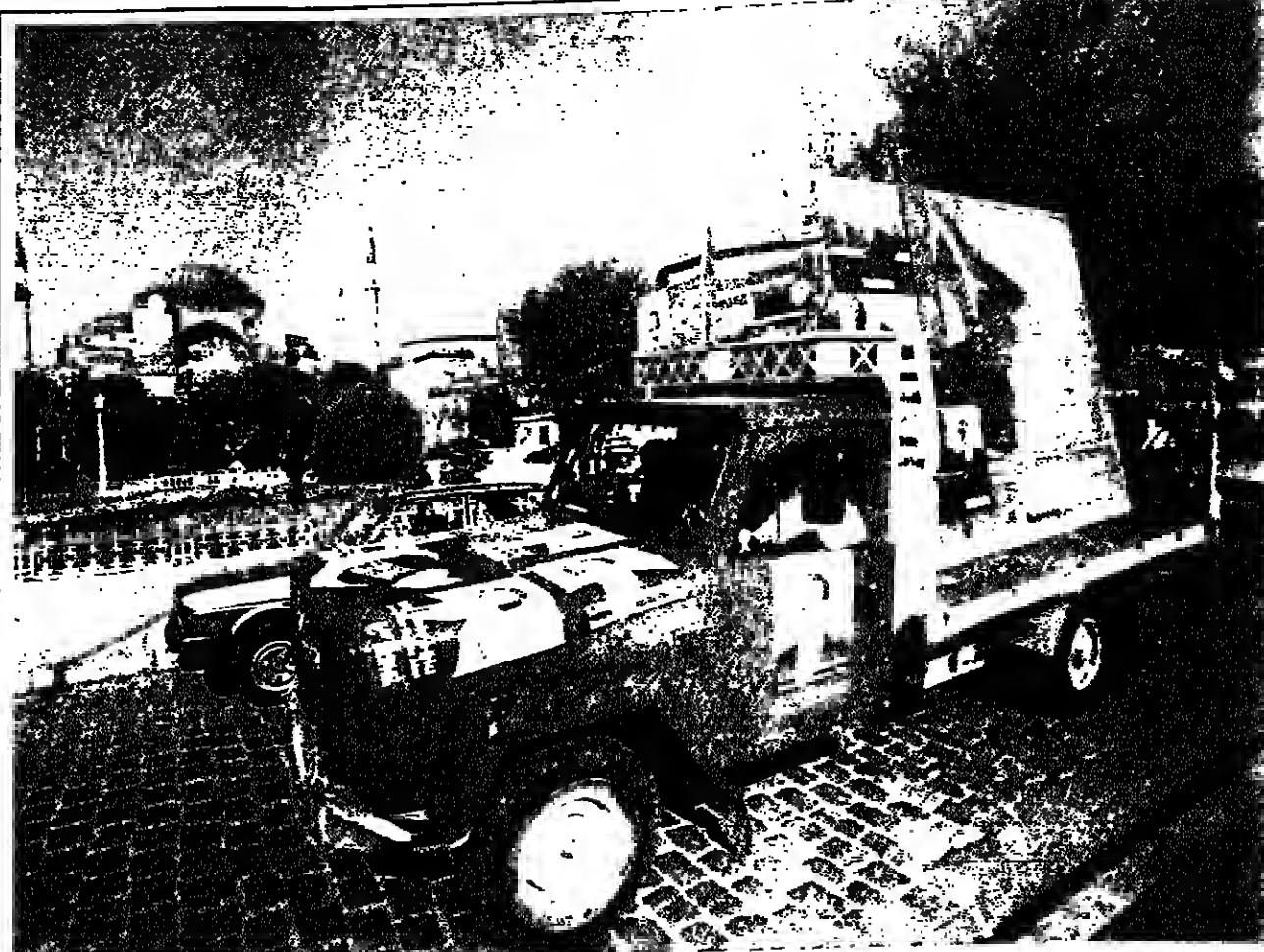
But the authorities have given no public signal that

they are ready to take a more lenient approach to Gamaa. Last week a presidential decree referred 22 suspected Gamaa members to a military court, whose verdicts cannot be appealed.

Hussein Amin, Egypt's former ambassador to Algeria and expert on Islamist militancy, said: "If the government is really wise, it should take a conciliatory line."

Gamaa and Jihad joined forces before Sadat's assassination but the two outlawed groups parted company again later.

Their campaign against the government has killed about 1,200 people, mostly militants and police, since 1992, but the violence has largely fizzled since Gamaa gunmen massacred 58 tourists and four Egyptians in Luxor in November 1997.



TURKEY'S ELECTIONS: An election campaign car of Islamic Virtue Party passes by the historical St. Sophia mosque in Sultanahmet, a tourist district of Istanbul on Saturday. Millions of Turks have been left behind amid Turkey's economic growth and are again expected to help propel the Islamic party to a prominent position in parliament after April 18 elections (AP photo)

Syria slams U.S. sanctions on arms firms

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria lashed out on Saturday at a U.S. decision to impose sanctions on three Russian arms firms which sold military hardware to the Syrian armed forces.

"The United States is getting carried away and imposing sanctions against Russian arms manufacturers who are selling Syria anti-tank missiles, which are defensive weapons which can be used to repulse Israeli attacks against Syrian territory," the official Al Thawra daily said.

Describing the U.S. stand as "paradoxical," the newspaper noted that Israel at the same time

was receiving "100 sophisticated U.S. aircraft capable of hitting most of the Middle East, notably Arab capitals."

"It is a policy of double standards because Washington is supplying arms on a daily basis to Israel which give it qualitative superiority over the Arabs," Al Thawra said.

"The United States is preventing us from defending ourselves and allowing Israel... to harm Arab capitals," the daily said.

The newspaper denounced Israel for "occupying Arab land, violating their rights and international resolutions which call for an Israeli

withdrawal from Palestinian territory, Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon."

Al Thawra added that Monday's visit to Moscow by Syrian President Hafez Assad "will be an element contributing to political equilibrium between the Arabs and their chief adversary [Israel]."

"Syria, backed by new military and political relations with Russia, can and will be an essential element in establishing an equilibrium in the region," it said.

Assad is to make a two-day visit to Russia beginning Monday, his first to

Moscow since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The U.S. State Department announced last week that sanctions would be imposed on the Tula Design Bureau, the Volsky Mechanical Plant and the Tsniitochmash plant for concluding deals to supply anti-tank missiles to Syria, a country blacklisted by Washington as a supporter of terrorism.

The Russian foreign ministry denounced the move and said the U.S. decision would deal a further blow to bilateral relations already strained by breaking point over the Kosovo crisis.

Iraq sceptical U.N. talks will bring anything new

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Baghdad on Saturday said it was sceptical that talks within the U.N. Security Council would lead to a lifting of the crippling embargo on Iraq because the body was under the thumb of the United States.

The official Al Jumhuriya daily said Washington and London were "perfidiously" blocking Security Council efforts to review ties with Iraq and were keen to wreck Russian, French and Chinese oil contracts with Baghdad.

"The painful reality is that the United Nations and the Security Council cannot resist the American hegemony," the newspaper said.

The comments follow talks by the 15-member Security Council on the three panels set up in January in a bid to end council deadlock on policy toward Iraq.

The panels focused on Iraqi disarmament, the humanitarian situation and issues stemming from the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, including the return of prisoners and

restitution of Kuwaiti archives.

Iraq on Friday rejected as "biased" the conclusions of the disarmament and humanitarian panel.

The most contentious panel was that on disarmament, on which the five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — remain divided.

On Friday, Britain, the Netherlands and the United States repeated their opposition to a lifting of sanctions because Iraq had not been fully disarmed of its weapons of

mass destruction, diplomats said.

The other 12 members supported lifting the oil embargo as an incentive to Iraq to cooperate with a future arms monitoring system recommended by the disarmament panel.

Under U.N. resolutions, the oil embargo imposed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can only be lifted when all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the means to make them have been dismantled.

Israeli settlement expansion draws sharp criticism

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government accused Israel on Friday of making it difficult to achieve peace in the Middle East by expanding Jewish housing on the West Bank.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright delivered the lecture to Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon in an one-hour meeting in her office.

"We are particularly concerned," said James Rubin, the State Department spokesman.

Rubin also suggested

Israel was not keeping its promise to halt construction at Jewish settlements on the West Bank, which PNA President Yasser Arafat hopes to take over for a Palestinian state.

"We have been told in the past that these types of activities would not take place as a matter of Israeli policy, both before, during and after the Wye negotiations," Rubin said, referring to the U.S.-mediated negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians last

October. "And that's why we've expressed our concern so clearly to the foreign minister."

Sharon made no reference to the settlements when he spoke briefly to reporters before Rubin gave his account of the Albright meeting.

The State Department, frustrated by a slowdown in Middle East peace-making, has credited Arafat with moving against terrorism and insisted Israel should go through with a 13.1 per cent pullback from the

West Bank promised in the Wye accords.

Sharon said "there is no question Arafat has done a few things," but "so far as waging a war against the terrorist infrastructure, this he has not done."

Albright again assured Sharon the administration was working hard to keep Arafat from declaring that he intends to establish a Palestinian state next month.

But that pledge was more than balanced by continuing U.S. determi-

nation to see Israel relinquish more territory and Albright's denunciation of Israeli settlement activity.

Rubin told reporters Israel was both constructing new settlements and expanding existing ones far beyond their boundaries, "in many cases expanding to distant hilltops."

These activities, he said, could prejudice future negotiations on control of the West Bank. "they make it very difficult to pursue peace," he said.

Arafat insists the Palestinians have the right to virtually all of the West Bank — territory Israel occupied in the 1967 Mideast war — and has vowed to establish on it a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem.

"We have made clear for a long time now that we are opposed to all unilateral actions by either side, including a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state," Rubin said.

However, Rubin said, "we also made clear that we're opposed to unilateral acts by Israel, including and especially settlement activity. Specifically, we're concerned about an accelerated pattern of Israeli actions on the ground since Wye which have become clearer in recent months."

On another controversial front, Sharon said Albright had not voiced any "displeasure" about his recent statement that Kosovo could pose a terrorism threat if Islamist extremists take control and establish an independent state there.

But Rubin said Albright "did express some concern about various reports of things that he had said."

President Bill Clinton and Albright "obviously would want the maximum support from all of our friends and allies and others as we pursue what we believe is a just cause," said Rubin, who noted that Israel was providing relief to Muslim refugees from Kosovo.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 French Programme
18:30 The Prince and The Pauper
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programme
19:30 News headlines
19:33 French Programme
20:30 Walker Texas Ranger
21:15 Divine Pledge
22:00 News in English
22:20 Blind Faith
23:59 End of TX.

PRAYER TIMES

03:48 Fajr
05:08 (Sunrise) Duha
11:37 Dhuhr
15:12 'Asr
18:05 Maghreb
19:26 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624833/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

In Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweith
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

On Sunday, temperatures are expected to rise with warm weather conditions prevailing. Clouds will appear at high altitudes and winds southeasterly moderate. On Monday, it will be cloudy and rainy particular in the northern parts of the Kingdom. Temperatures are

expected to dip gradually and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.
Amman09/27
Aqaba17/32
Deserts08/29
Jordan Valley16/31

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 23 Aqaba 29. Humidity readings: Amman 14 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun06/22
Jerash10/25
Um Qays10/25
Madaba09/27
Petra08/29
Dead Sea16/31

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mazin Nhai5350435
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Sha'ir4391405
Dr. Hani Al Ahmad4394336
Dr. Fakhri Bilel5522233

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadha Pharmacy5537004
Ruh Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Salih(02)246858
Fon'ad Pharmacy(02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Fadi Al Khatib(05)3650753
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints7871111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4642381/6
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malthus, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5354444
Al-Muasher Hospital5662279
Al-Ahli, Abdli5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen4777101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000
Jerusalem Hospital4387181

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323

ZARQA National Hospital
(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)909990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Jeddah (add) (RJ)(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital(02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02)7102831, (02)7102911
Speciality Hospital(02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital
(02)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
18:15 Paris (RJ)
18:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:00 London, Brussels (RJ)
19:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:15 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:45 Bangkok, Doha (RJ)
20:10 Beirut (RJ)
20:20 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Frankfurt, Berlin (RJ)
21:05 Rome (RJ)
21:05 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
21:20 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:50 Vienna, Athens (RJ)
22:10 Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
01:20 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
07:55 Dubai (EK)
09:00 Sana'a (Y)
10:30 Kuwait (KU)
11:50 Moscow (SU)
12:00 Abu Dhabi (GF)
12:30 Jeddah (SV)
14:15 Doha (QR)
17:35 Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
04:30 Beirut (RJ)
05:20 Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
08:15 Frankfurt (RJ)
08:30 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
11:15 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:45 Rome (RJ)
11:35 Athens, Vienna (RJ)
12:25 London (RJ)
20:20 Jeddah (RJ)
21:30 New Delhi (RJ)
21:35 Cairo (RJ)
21:40 Bangkok (RJ)
21:45 Damascus (RJ)
21:45 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
23:30 Sana'a (RJ)
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
01:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
09:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (EK)
10:00 Sana'a (Y)
11:45 Kuwait (KU)
12:05 Doha (GF)
13:20 Moscow (SU)
14:00 Jeddah (SV)
15:15 Doha (QR)
18:35 Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:15 Tel Aviv (arriving from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Government, public diverge in assessment of Kosovo crisis

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — Government and civil society institutions are split over the Kosovo crisis, with the state clearly supporting NATO, while associations and political parties condemn the attacks against Serbia as a flagrant violation of international law.

On March 30 Jordan recalled its chargé d'affaires in Belgrade in protest of Serb actions, defined by a Royal Court spokesman as "ethnic cleansing, killing and displacement" of Muslim ethnic Albanians from the Serbian province of Kosovo.

Expressing deep concern over the reported Serb crimes against Kosovars, His Majesty King Abdullah instructed the government to send humanitarian and medical assistance to the refugees.

An air bridge was opened last weekend with Her Majesty Queen Rania's mission to Macedonia, where she oversaw the distribution of 18,000 tonnes of tents, blankets, and food donated by individuals and charities.

Jordan's official stand vis-à-vis the Kosovo crisis was similar to that of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which concluded an emergency meeting in Geneva on Wednesday expressing full support for NATO and condemning the policy of "ethnic cleansing" perpetrated by Serbian authorities against Albanian Kosovars.

But most political parties, professional associations and opinion leaders have taken a diametrically opposite stand, accusing NATO of provoking the human tragedy of refugees from Kosovo.

The country's strongest party, the Islamic Action Front, has squarely placed the blame on NATO, describing the crisis as a conspiracy orchestrated by the "Atlantic alliance" to clear the Balkans of all Muslims, while claiming to act in their defence.

According to IAF Secretary General Abdul Latif Ahrat, the U.S. "knew that once they launched strikes against Serbia, Serbs would have reacted by attacking the Kosovars."

"Public opinion has to understand this conspiracy aimed to cancel any Muslim presence from the Balkans."

The Muslim Brotherhood used almost the same wording in a statement last week, warning "Arab and Muslim peoples and leaders [against] the international conspiracy aimed at driving Muslims out of Europe."

While denouncing the "barbaric Serb aggression against Muslim citizens of Kosovo and calling on all Arab and Islamic nations to halt this massacre of humanity," the Brotherhood also maintained that NATO's hidden agenda was the same as that of the Milosevic regime — cleansing

Kosovo of ethnic Albanians.

The Jordan Writers Association last week issued the latest in a series of official communiqués by many syndicates condemning NATO strikes as aimed at destroying Yugoslavia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity, while "humiliating Russia before the world, and asserting U.S. supremacy over the European Union."

Intellectuals and ordinary people alike have conceded their sense of hesitancy and unease in approving of air strikes that target a regime accused of suppressing its Muslim population, but that are, at the same time, led by the same powers — the U.S. and Great Britain — that attacked Iraq and championed sanctions against several Arab states.

Together with the usual scepticism towards U.S. and NATO intents, it is also the political record of former Yugoslavia that makes some Jordanians reluctant to subscribe to Western arguments: Yugoslavia, a founding member of the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement, has traditionally been a precious ally of Arabs and a warm advocate of the Palestinian cause in international fora during the Cold War.

Ties with Arab countries have been close since General Tito's time. According to Atef Kawar, a contractor who studied in and travels regularly to the Yugoslav Federation, some 50,000 Jordanians have graduated from Yugoslav universities, and around 2,500 Yugoslav women are currently married to Jordanians.

Two thousand Jordanians presently reside in Yugoslavia, says Kawar, while many infrastructure projects in the Kingdom were funded and carried out by Yugoslavians, from the King Talal Dam and the Amman-Azraq road to the Sweileh Bridge, in Amman, and water and sewage systems in remote areas, such as the northern town of Ramtha.

The prestigious Al Al Bayr University was also built thanks to a barter-deal with Belgrade against Jordanian phosphates, that Yugoslavia imports in significant quantities.

"There are neither religious nor ethnic motives behind NATO's attacks, which serve the purpose of emphasising U.S. hegemony on the whole world, by cornering Russia and China, and showing that, in the same way as Washington controlled the U.N. Security Council nine years ago to attack Iraq, it can also control NATO," said Kawar.

Many columnists have drawn the comparison between the U.S.-led strikes against Belgrade and those against Baghdad.

"Not only were the same weapons and strategies used, but in both cases the U.S. openly declared its intention to overthrow the existing regime," said Al Dostour last week in an unsigned editorial.

Arabs and Jordanians alike "feel powerless and indecisive vis-à-vis this war [...]. The victims in this crisis are Muslim people, therefore it is no surprise that the Arab and Islamic worlds have condemned the Serb campaigns against Kosovars," said Al Dostour.

"But we also realise that NATO's aggressive campaign sets a precedent, and proves that the U.S. can carry out any disciplinary military operation against any country or people it deems appropriate without referring to the United Nations."

Echoing such widespread views, columnist Rakan Majali wrote also last week that "the brutal military attacks against Serbia send a clear message to the world: That the U.S. has a free hand to operate anywhere at any time."

According to columnist Sufian Tell, the U.S. is applying an old winning strategy against two of its enemies: the Non-Aligned Movement, and Islam.

"If you have two enemies, wage a war between them. Whoever wins will be weak enough for you to easily finish him off."

But the Balkan crisis also gives the U.S. the opportunity to fight a third, even stronger enemy, says Tell.

"The euro, the sole rival of the U.S. dollar."

Together with parallels between the current war in the Balkans and the 1991 war against Iraq, columnists and ordinary people alike have also drawn a comparison between the tide of Albanian refugees fleeing their homes and the memory still vivid in the collective conscience of Palestinians driven away from their homes in the 1948 and 1967 wars.

"When we heard the Albanian refugees on television saying that they were intimidated to say good-bye to their homes and leave, or stay and die, we all remembered when the same words were directed at us by Jewish soldiers," wrote Al Arab Al Yawm's Mustafa Al Far in a recent column.

"What is happening in Kosovo today is what happened in Palestine in 1948: people are tortured, forced to leave their homes with only a few belongings, their passports are burnt, and they are escorted for miles on foot to the borders, dumped there, and prevented from returning."

"Now, will the international community remain silent while what happened to the Palestinians happens again today to these refugees?"

Anti-normalisation camp takes aim at Amman International Theatre Festival

By Dima Hamdan and Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The anti-normalisation committee of Jordan's 13 professional associations on Saturday launched a boycott of the current Amman International Theatre Festival on grounds it is "financed by foreign sources and foreign groups participate in it."

A statement issued on Saturday by the committee also asked the Amman Municipality "to take the same stance on the issue, to keep in harmony with public opinion and hold local festivals that are purely patriotic."

Nader Omran, president of Al Fawanees Theatre Group that organised the festival, protested that "the language of the statement is general and

vague."

"They accuse us of receiving foreign funding, which can be misinterpreted to mean that we are taking funds from Israel," Omran told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview yesterday.

"We hoped they would be more accurate in acquiring their information. They should have contacted us directly instead of relying on third sources," he added.

The Artists Associations had raised questions about the festival, which opened on Thursday, because the organisers had invited Al Qasaba, a theatre group including Arab Israelis.

"We expected some forms of complaints and protests, but did not expect this to come from the professional associa-

tions, which we greatly respect."

Ali Abu Sukkar, head of the anti-normalisation committee, told the Jordan Times before the festival opened: "We have to differentiate between an Arab and an Israeli. However, my advice is to avoid any action that would raise suspicions."

According to Marwan Hamameh, member of Al Fawanees and manager of the festival, the boycott was "a private initiative by some individuals, which was not discussed either by the council of the Artists Association or by the Council of Presidents of the Professional Associations."

Rejecting the accusation of "normalising with Israel," members of Al Fawanees said yesterday's statement was part

of a campaign against their group.

"We are against normalisation as much as the Artists Association is, but they are targeting us for some reason with this false campaign," Hamameh protested.

"Al Qasaba is a group from east Jerusalem, based next to Orient House in east Jerusalem. Its members are Palestinians, and it never has received support from the Israeli ministry of culture," he said.

According to Hamameh, one of Al Qasaba members, actor Mohammad Bakri, who holds an Israeli passport, is being personally targeted by the boycott.

"But Bakri also participated in a festival here organised last summer by the Artists Associ-

ation and the Ministry of Culture. Did he not have an Israeli passport, back then?" asked Hamameh.

The Amman Theatre Festival is the latest victim of what observers have seen as a group of "zealots" in the professional associations, who, over the last year, have stepped up their campaign against seminars, conferences, and other events organised in cooperation with foreign institutions, claiming they are part of a "Zionist infiltration" of Jordanian intelligentsia and cultural life.

The syndicates, with a membership of around 80,000 and mainly dominated by Islamists, have fiercely opposed the 1994 peace treaty with Israel and championed a campaign to combat normalisation with the Jewish state.

Police refer landlords to court for violations of new residency and labour regulations

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Police have referred scores of Jordanian landlords to court for violating one-week-old residency rules enforced by the government in a bid to organise the labour market, Ghazi Falah, deputy director of the Public Security Department said Saturday.

"Foreigners are questioned by police, during regular patrols or in isolated crackdown campaigns, about the place of their residences. If the police discovers that landlords have not informed the nearest police station with details about their tenant, they are immediately referred to court," another official from the PSD, who requested anonymity, said.

Falah could not disclose the exact number of people being referred to court.

Under the new regulations, employers must present the nearest police station with details about any foreign employees in less than 48 hours, owners of furnished apartments must inform police in less than 24 hours of any foreigners who reside on the premises. They also must immediately inform the police as soon as the tenant leaves the rented place.

Landlords and employers who fail to meet the new regulations will face criminal charges ranging from severe fines to imprisonment. Foreigners will immediately be deported.

The government said that its campaign against foreign workers did not lose its steam.

"We have started the process of regulating the Jordanian labour market. We are serious in our drive to fight unemployment," Minister of Interior Nayef Qadi said Saturday.

The government which is fighting an uphill battle to replace foreign workers with Jordanians, is also eager to acquire accurate statistics of the estimated one million non-Jordanian labourers — at least 35 per cent of the labour force is believed to be jobless.

"The government gave foreigners a grace period to rectify their legal status, and whoever is caught after this period will be asked to leave the country," Qadi told the Jordan Times.

According to the Labour Law, 14 categories of employment are restricted to Jordanian labourers including doctors, lawyers, phar-

macists, engineers, and teachers.

Ministry of Labour figures show that around 170,000 foreigners have rectified their status.

Unemployment in Jordan is officially estimated at 16 per cent while independently at around 27 per cent.

Other provisions of the new law include issuing foreigners a temporary residency card upon their entry into Jordan. The cards would include information such as nationality, date and place of birth, passport number and place of issue and the reason for visiting.

However, officials at Al Karama border post with Iraq complained that foreign labourers, mostly from Egypt Syria and Iraq, who enter the country for the first time, randomly chose a hotel

name in Amman as the place of their residency. This, the official said, makes it very difficult for police to keep records.

"Iraqis who know nothing in the country make their companions select any hotel name in downtown Amman and fill in the entry form with that name," the official told the Jordan Times on Thursday.

Police officials said such cases were the exception rather than the rule, and did not constitute a serious problem in record keeping.

"In any case foreigners will have to inform the police with the place of their residence within two weeks," Fayez Da'aja, deputy head of the Department of Borders and Residency at the PSD, told the Jordan Times.

Hard to hide in the grass, but easy to enjoy JRD gives egg decoration a new twist

By Rana Awwad

AMMAN — A collection of hand-painted ostrich eggs depicting Jordan's natural heritage is currently on display at the Jordan River Designs as part of efforts to generate income for impoverished citizens.

The exhibition, the first of its kind in Jordan, is presented by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, a non-governmental organisation devoted to the preservation of wildlife in the Kingdom.

The week-long display, which opened on Wednesday, features colourful illustration of oryxes, gazelles, buffaloes, ibexes and other rare species currently bred in Jordan's six nature reserves, some of which were inspired by Qasr Amra mosaics. The illustrations painted onto the eggs are the creation of local artist Oraih Sakkijah.

The eggs were provided by the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve near Azraq which introduced an ostrich breeding programme in 1979.

Only infertile eggs are used, in line with JRD's philosophy of natural heritage preservation.

"After examining eggs, we only take

those that are proved to be infertile," and "we carefully empty and clean the eggs before colouring them," said Sakkijah, who is a nature activist, to the Jordan Times.

"The eggs project falls under the activities of the society's socio-economic department, which was established in 1994 to lead and further boost local conservation projects," said Rebecca Salti manager of the Dana's Economic Development Project.

Salti explained that the revenues of such activities are used to support sustainable development projects. She added that the society's "ultimate goal is to teach locals how to make use of ostrich eggs to generate their own income."

In an attempt to increase Jordan's ostrich population, the RSCN has initiated the Ostrich Adoption Programme, in which "foster parents" can adopt an ostrich for JD40 a year.

The exhibition which ends on Monday, coincides with the Easter holiday, during which Christian children traditionally paint eggs for the traditional Easter egg hunt.

Court hands death sentence to student convicted of murder

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The Criminal Court sentenced a 20-year-old student convicted of robbing and murdering his friend in December 1997 to death last week.

The court tribunal said Abdullah Sa'adi guilty of the premeditated murder of Ra'ed Ibrahim, 24. The prosecutor said Sa'adi stabbed the victim, slashed his throat, and robbed him of JD500.

The incident occurred in the victim's car. According to court transcripts a day before the incident, Sa'adi went to the Hashmieh Square downtown, Amman, and purchased a switchblade which he used in the murder.

On Dec. 3, the victim picked up the defendant at his home, and the two friends went for a ride to the park, the court papers said. When Ibrahim drove into a deserted area, Sa'adi

drew his knife and stabbed him once in the chest, the court said.

"The defendant then pulled [the victim] to the ground and slit his throat, then fled the scene with the victim's car," the court stated.

The defendant told the prosecutor general that he killed Ibrahim because he had asked him to have sex with him on several occasions, and that on the evening of the incident, he was again propositioned. However, the court rejected the accusations of sexual overtures because "the defendant contradicted his statements and was unable to provide evidence to prove his story."

The tribunal was comprised of Justices Mohammad Ajameh, Mifteh Mubaidin and Issa Hamdan. The verdict will automatically be reviewed by a higher court within 30 days.

Jubilee student briefs

U.S. Pentagon on Jordan's environment

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's Ghaida Nassar, a Jubilee School student, represented the Kingdom in a programme on future world leaders held in Washington with the participation of students from 28 countries.

In her worksheet entitled "Environment Protection," Nassar provided a detailed presentation on Jordan's history, followed by suggestions relating to environment protection.

The programme's schedule included lectures, seminars and meetings with several policy-makers at the Congress, the Pentagon, in addition to some visits to various American institutions.

The participation comes under the framework of the school's philosophy which calls for exchanging expertise and getting acquainted with foreign cultures through such participations.

What's Going On

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

- Workshop entitled "Technical Elements in the Theatre" at the Royal Cultural Centre (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)
- Mask Making Workshop by May Wather and Wafa Quossous at Tyche Hotel on Sunday April 12 (10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.)
- Making cartoons with Children by Erling Ericksson at the Hayy Nazzal Development Centre, daily until April 14 (2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.)
- Tanzanian play "Death of a Coconut Tree," Egyptian play "The Last Trip," Iraqi Play "Sidra" and Jordanian play "Shahrazad's Dreams" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Sunday and Monday respectively at 6:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m.

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY

- Shakespeare's comedy "Kings and Clowns" at the InterContinental Hotel at 8:30 p.m. (There will be another performance on Monday 12 April at 8:30 p.m.)

LECTURE

- "Drama As Social Conscience: Priestly's 'An Inspector Calls'" by Dr. Nicholas Linfield at the British Council, Jamal Amman on Monday April 12 at 5:00 p.m.

DOCUMENTARY ON POVERTY

- "Poverty: The Human Dimension" — Radio Jordan's documentary at 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (The programme, broadcast every Monday at these times, attempts to shed light on the different dimensions of poverty in Jordan through a critical analysis of the various formal and informal agencies and programmes that provide assistance to the poor)

FILMS

- "The Wedding Singer" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).
- "Wild Strawberries" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman on Tuesday April 13 at 6:30 p.m.
- "Phenomenon" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman, on Tuesday April 13 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 5650458).
- "First Knight" at the British Council, Jabal Amman on Tuesday, April 13 at 6:00 p.m. (Children's film "The Magic of the Faraway Tree" will be screened on Wednesday April 14 at 5:00 p.m.)

EXHIBITIONS

- Plastic art exhibition by Hussein Da'ssa entitled "Horizons of the Nineties" at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, until April 20 (Tel. 56813034).
- Works by Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until May 6. Also showing an exhibition of photographs by Jordanian artist Adnan Sharif entitled "Spring at Darat Al Funun," until May 6.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Qadhafi calls King

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received a phone call from Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi. The two leaders discussed bilateral relations. King Abdullah congratulated President Qadhafi on the lifting of the sanctions and voiced his appreciation of Qadhafi's sincere and honourable stand by Jordan.

Ajameh appointed telecommunications secretary general

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Saturday endorsing the Cabinet's decision to appoint Abdul Majid Al Masha'aleh Al Ajameh as secretary general of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications. Ajameh succeeds Muzahem Al Muheisen, who was appointed director general of the Vocational Training Corporation.

Kaabneh meets Turkish naval commander

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mira'i Al Kaabneh on Saturday reviewed with the visiting Commander of the Turkish Naval Force General Salem Daroush Oulo the situations in the region and bilateral cooperation, in addition to issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by Chief of Staff for Land Forces, the Commander of the Royal Navy Force, the Turkish ambassador to Jordan and the Turkish military attaché in Amman.

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's Science and Population Welfare Minister Ahida Hussain resigned Saturday to fight charges she stole electricity. "The prime minister has accepted my resignation and now I am free to contest my case," Hussain said in a telephone interview. Hussain, a big landowner and lawmaker in the lower house of parliament or national assembly, was charged with stealing electricity from the state-run water and power development authority to run her extensive agricultural holdings in eastern Punjab province. She has denied the charges. The state-owned power company is on the verge of bankruptcy because of rampant electricity theft, while consumers tamper with the metres to reduce the readings. In an attempt to stop the theft the government enlisted the help of the military who has taken over the power company.



EASTER IN RUSSIA: A Russian Orthodox priest sprinkles holy water on believers and Easter cakes and gifts they brought for a blessing ceremony in downtown Moscow on Saturday. Russians celebrate the Orthodox Easter this weekend (AFP photo)

Apparent attempt on Chechen president's life averted

GROZNY, Russia (AP) — Police on Saturday discovered and safely detonated two bombs that officials said were part of a plot to kill Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov. One of the bombs was found near a square in the town of Starly Atagy where Maskhadov gave a speech to thousands of people only hours later. The second bomb was found on a road between Starly Atagy and Chechnya's capital of Grozny, according to the Interfax news agency. Presidential spokesman Mairbek Vuchagayev said the bombs were intended to kill Maskhadov. If so, the effort would have been the second attempt on Maskhadov's life since mid-March and the fifth in three years.

Maskhadov was a leading rebel commander during Chechnya's 1994-96 war of secession from Russia and won a landslide election victory in January 1997. He now faces severe opposition from several warlords who have accused him of being too friendly with Moscow.

He has also been unable to stem a wave of kidnappings and other crimes that has plagued Chechnya and spilled into neighbouring regions since the war.

Despite the discovery of the two bombs, Maskhadov delivered a 30-minute speech at the rally in Starly Atagy, where 4,000 city administration officials, Muslim leaders and armed vigilantes units declared their loyalty to him. Another estimated 10,000 supporters

also turned out at the event. He claimed that secret services from Western countries and other enemies were spreading violence in Chechnya to prevent the creation of a fully independent Chechen state.

"We are going through hard times now. The enemy is within us but it is invisible. We are one nation, we have one religion but there is no accord between us," he said.

Meanwhile, the Interfax news agency reported Saturday that Russian President Boris Yeltsin has expressed a desire to meet with Maskhadov in the near future to discuss controlling violence in and around Chechnya, including a number of bombings and kidnappings in recent months. But Yeltsin's spokesman,

Dmitry Yakushkin, said a great deal of work was needed on both sides before the two men meet. "For the meeting to take place and bear fruit, it must be prepared for very well," Yakushkin said Friday.

Interfax also reported that Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov would discuss preparations for the meeting with unspecified officials during a trip to the Caucasus region of North Ossetia on April 17-18.

Moscow has a working relationship with Maskhadov, but it is not eager to give him a forum to assert Chechnya's claims of autonomy. Moscow still considers the mostly Muslim republic part of its territory, and no country has recognised Chechen independence claims.

H. Kong to look into abuse of mainland detainees

HONG KONG (AFP) — The Hong Kong government on Saturday said it was concerned about allegations of abuse of a group of mainland Chinese while in detention here and pledged to investigate complaints. "We are very concerned about the allegations that have been made. Specific complaints formally lodged will be seriously looked into," a spokesman said. "Anyone who feels aggrieved should come forward and provide the authorities with more information about their allegations of abuse."

"Due confidentiality will be accorded," the spokesman said.

A Hong Kong human rights group on Friday released a survey detailing abuses against a group of Chinese illegal immigrants while held in detention here.

Out of 90 respondents to a questionnaire ninety one per cent claimed they were strip

searched, with a reason for the search only given in four of the cases.

Three detainees were forced to strip three times and two were searched twice. One mainlanders was forced to do squats while naked, the survey found.

But the government said none of the Chinese have made formal complaints and urged them to come forward so that their cases can be properly investigated. The mainlanders, who have

all overstayed their Hong Kong visas but claim right of abode here under a landmark court ruling, were rounded up at the end of last month.

The government insists they should return to China to apply for residency through official channels, but they are fighting for the right to remain.

A court ordered immigration authorities to release the overstayers pending the outcome of an appeal bearing in a test case on May 20.

7 acquitted in rape of French tourist

CHANDIGARH, India (AP) — All seven persons, including the grandson of a slain politician, were acquitted Saturday of raping a French tourist after the victim did not show up in court in a northern Indian state, officials said.

After waiting for months for the alleged rape victim to appear, judge Sant Prakash closed the prosecution's case last year.

On Saturday, the judge said the prosecution had not been able to produce any evidence against the accused. Also, the woman from Lyons, France, did not show up in court

despite several notices.

Last year, the government attorney told the judge that the woman was reluctant to testify against Gurkirat Singh, the grandson of the slain politician, fearing her life would be in danger if she came to India.

Gurkirat Singh, grandson of former Chief Minister Beant Singh of Punjab state, could have received up to 10 years in jail if he had been convicted.

The alleged rape in 1994 caused a sensation in Punjab, where Beant Singh was the highest elected official. The prosecution

case suffered an early blow when the woman's boyfriend refused to identify any of the accused in court, although he said she was raped.

A foreign office official told the court that diplomatic channels could not be used to serve summons on the victim since no treaty exists between India and France for assistance in criminal matters.

The prosecution said that the woman was drinking with friends at a bar in this northern Indian city in 1994 when Gurkirat Singh walked in with six friends and a column of security

guards. The guards were provided by the government since his grandfather was leading a government onslaught against a violent Sikh separatist movement and his family had received death threats.

The guards later chased the woman's car and forcibly took her away, accusing her of carrying drugs. The woman was then allegedly raped by the seven men, including Gurkirat Singh, in a factory, prosecutors said.

Chief minister Beant Singh was killed in a car-bomb explosion triggered by terrorists in 1995.

U.S. Congressman seeks more aid for Cambodia

PHNOM PENH (R) — A U.S. Congressman said on Saturday the United States and the international community should do more to help Cambodia in its fight against "terrible" levels of poverty and malnutrition.

Tony Hall, a Democrat member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Ohio, said he would seek more U.S. humanitarian aid for Cambodia.

"I will be pushing for it (more aid). There's no question that we should be doing more," Hall told a news conference.

"People are living in terrible poverty... The international community can do a much better job in helping this country."

The United States suspended all but humanitarian aid to Cambodia in 1997 after then First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh was ousted by his junior coalition partner and co-premier, Hun Sen.

Washington gave Cambodia \$35 million in aid in the year before Hun Sen's coup and Hall said that figure had now fallen to an "unacceptable" \$12 million a year.

Hall, who has made four visits to famine-stricken North Korea in recent years, said he saw some similarities between that country and Cambodia.

"There's tremendous suffering in both countries but the malnutrition is differ-

ent," he said. "There's acute malnutrition in North Korea. You don't see a lot of acute malnutrition in Cambodia but you see a lot of people living very much on the margin," he said.

U.N. officials call grinding rural poverty Cambodia's silent crisis. Half of all children under five years of age are stunted and 20 per cent suffer from severe malnutrition through chronic poor nutrition and periods of acute food shortage, the United Nations says.

Cambodia's infant mortality rate, average life expectancy and education levels are the worst in the region, according to U.N. figures.

Hall had talks with Prime Minister Hun Sen on his visit and said he was encouraged by the premier's response to the problem. Hun Sen has promised that his government will fight poverty.

Hall also said humanitarian aid should not be linked to political objectives.

Last month U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell warned Hun Sen that U.S. aid would be at risk if a proposed trial of Khmer Rouge leaders did not measure up to international standards.

Hall said the impact of the 1975-79 period of Khmer Rouge rule, when some 1.7 million people were killed, was a main factor behind today's poverty.

Six killed in Midwest storms

MONTGOMERY, Ohio (AP) — Chain saws and patience have become essential tools as residents begin repairing their lives a day after a tornado killed four people and demolished more than 200 homes in Cincinnati's suburbs.

Two other people were killed in Illinois as powerful storms tore through the Midwest.

Ohio officials were still tabulating the destruction hours after a pre-dawn twister with 320-kph winds carved a narrow, spotty path through affluent subdivisions in Montgomery, Blue Ash and other communities Friday morning.

"Trees, huge trees, looked like some large mower with a rotary blade went through and sheared them all off," said Montgomery Mayor Richard Tuten.

The storm uprooted and snapped trees, downed electric power lines and tore roofs off homes and churches. Houses were smashed into piles of rubble, and shopping centre parking lots were strewn with broken glass.

At least 42 people were treated at hospitals, most with bruises or cuts. Two people were killed in a house, and two in separate car crashes.

One of the victims, a 40-year-old man, was thrown from his car when the wind flipped it over, said Blue Ash police chief Mike Allen. The same gust flipped a tractor-trailer.

The State Emergency Management Agency estimated 200 homes were destroyed in Cincinnati's northeast suburbs. The storm also damaged houses in a

western Ohio county and flipped campers at a dealership near Dayton.

Ohio governor Bob Taft declared emergencies in three counties, a step to make those areas eligible for federal loan assistance. He said the state was providing bottled water, tetanus vaccine and road-clearing help.

"My heart went out to the families who went to bed last night and woke up to this," Taft said. "If there is a positive side to this whole tragedy, it has been the tremendous outpouring of support."

The storms began to intensify Thursday afternoon in states to the west. High winds damaged homes in Indiana, and at least nine suspected tornadoes destroyed homes, flattened barns and uprooted trees in Iowa.

A five-block area in the

Nebraska town of North Bend was ravaged by a tornado, and storms also damaged buildings and downed power lines in Missouri.

In Ashland, Illinois, a community of 1,200, a tornado late Thursday ripped apart 17 mobile homes in a trailer park and killed a 68-year-old woman. A 43-year-old

woman died in a mobile home in Cisco, 105 kilometres to the east.

"I was sucked out the door and watched two trailers right in front of me go up in the air," said Louann Judd of Ashland.

George Clemons, 79, who lived by himself in his trailer, came back in the morning drizzle to see what little of his home remained.

"It was just like a bomb went off," he said.

Japan marks anniversary of imperial wedding

TOKYO (R) — Japan's Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko on Saturday celebrated the 40th anniversary of one of this century's most celebrated weddings.

The couple marked the event with a concert at the Imperial Palace attended by about 150 guests, including their three children and their families, an imperial household agency spokesman said.

In April 1959, then Crown

Prince Akihito broke imperial precedent by marrying a commoner, Michiko Shoda, the daughter of a wealthy industrialist.

Their marriage helped alter the nation's and the world's perceptions about the imperial family, which had been enshrined in the history books by Emperor Hirohito and the legends who worshipped him during World War II as a divinity.

The imperial couple broke with tradition by raising

their three children — Crown Prince Naruhito 39, Prince Akishino, 33, and Princess Nori, 29 — at home rather than sending them to private tutors outside the palace.

Akihito became emperor in 1989 and his two sons have followed in his footsteps by marrying non-aristocrats in gala weddings full of pomp and pageantry.

Crown Princess Masako, the Harvard educated former diplomat, was expected to

follow the example of Empress Michiko by modernising the throne when she entered the imperial family in 1993.

The 35-year-old Masako emerged from the marriage not as a force of liberalisation, but instead as a demure, prudishly attired figure who walks a regimented three steps behind her husband.

The two have no children, leading to waves of speculation about imperial succession.

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India puts its latest satellite in geo-stationary orbit

BANGALORE, India (AFP) — Indian experts on Saturday successfully moved a telecommunications satellite into a geostationary orbit, officials here said.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which built the satellite and launched it on April 3 on a European Ariane rocket from French Guiana, said the exercise was carried out at 9.37 am (0407 GMT).

The \$52-million INSAT-2E is expected to reach its destination in about a week, an ISRO spokesman said from the agency's headquarters in this southern city.

The 2.6-tonne satellite, the sixth of its type, developed since a day after its launch. But ISRO said the minor error was rectified.

The spokesman also said ISRO would deploy the satellite's two antennas, solar array and solar sail by Sunday as it orbited towards

its final location. "All sub-systems are now functioning normally and the satellite is continuously monitored," the spokesman said.

The state-run ISRO has said the latest telecommunications satellite would be followed by a seventh, INSAT-3B, in around six months.

More than half of INSAT-2E's capacity had been sold for \$100 million to the 104-nation Washington-based

consortium Intersat — the first foreign buyer of Indian satellite transponders.

INSAT-2E's footprint covers all of Asia and Australia. It is the most advanced satellite built by ISRO and has a 12-year life.

A similar Indian satellite, INSAT-2D, was abandoned after it was crippled by a power failure in October 1997, three months after its launch. The launch of INSAT-2E was delayed by almost a year.

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Economy high on new government's agenda

THE NEW government of Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh has already scored two points to its credit: First it placed economic issues at the top of its agenda announcing that lack of economic growth, unemployment, poverty, and water shortage are the main issues which the government will shoulder. Second, the prime minister admitted publicly that the Jordanian economy is not only slowing down as we were told before, but is actually retreating. Thus he did not rule out the possibility of negative growth during the past two years and up to this moment.

Aside from these two points, the policy statement of the government as presented to the Parliament for a vote of confidence was not very different from previous government statements, especially as presented in the newspapers. However, it was quite different if watched on the television. The prime minister spoke

with authority projecting determination and willingness to act forcefully and bring about results.

In general, the implied message was that this is a strong government, which has the will to make a difference, and the ability to carry out its plans. What it is promising is not new and has been promised several times in the past, but the way this government will go about these promises, slogans, objectives and policies will be different.

As far as the contents of the policy statements are concerned we find: Stability of the dinar, keeping inflation under control, securing the independence of the judiciary, supporting the Armed Forces, opening up to the institutions of the civil society, dialogue, cracking-down on corruption, protecting national unity, reducing unemployment, alleviating poverty, restoring economic growth, privatisation, transparency, administrative reform, backing the

Palestinian people, reiterating peace strategy but not at any price, a wide open information apparatus, democracy, freedom of expression with responsibility, bettering relations with the Arab World, reducing indebtedness, paying attention to every sector, and reconsidering many laws and situations.

We don't doubt the intentions of the prime minister, his competence or his determination. He enjoys the full confidence and support of the Palace and the people, but for practical purposes, one must ask what are the real options for the government, facing the great challenges it identified in its statement. To point out a desired objective is something, and to have the means to achieve it is something else. Good intentions and determination are important but not enough.

In order for the Jordanian economy to take off, it needs a large

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Fanek

amount of capital. Domestic savings are hardly enough to compensate for the depreciation of the fixed productive assets in the country, estimated at JD600 million a year. Utilisation of local capital will also translate itself into attrition of foreign currencies and depletion of the Central Bank

reserves. Jordan needs to fuel economic growth by capital from external sources such as expatriates remittances, foreign aid and grants, exports of goods and services, and Arab and foreign investments.

The practical and realistic options of the government are: To secure jobs in the Gulf states, bring the local labour market under control, attract more grants from abroad, encourage exports, promote tourism, and privatisation as means to lure investors.

Too much is expected from the new government, its options are limited, the space for manoeuvring is very narrow, the mission is extremely difficult. But it is not impossible.

Hopefully the government will not be frustrated, and the people will not be disappointed.

McCarthyism revisited?

YESTERDAY'S COMMUNIQUE from the so-called "anti-normalisation committee" of the professional associations, castigating the Al Fawanees Theatre Group for inviting an Arab Israeli to participate in the Amman International Festival for Independent Theatre (and we emphasise "independent") is an appalling demonstration of Jordanian support to Arabs who live under in diverse circumstances not of their making, and who nonetheless aspire to promote Arab culture whenever possible.

We find it amazing that the committee or any one of its members could be so audacious as to publicly suggest that the theatre festival is "unpatriotic" because an Arab of Israel participates with a Palestinian troupe, or because the non-profit festival must rely on "foreign funding" to put on a week-long production which Jordanians can attend for free. Maybe the professional associations should review their brand of patriotism. A true patriot would show more respect for both the law of his homeland and his culture.

Which authority has granted the professional associations the right to dictate where, when and under what circumstances another Arab will exercise his right to free expression and promote his culture?

The extent to which the professional associations and their so-called anti-normalisation committee are allowed to vilify and slander those they accuse of "normalising" relations with Israel and of being part of the international "Zionist conspiracy" has grown ridiculous in the past year. The announcement last week that they will soon release a "black list" of "normalisers" is frightening and lays the groundwork for a black moment of Jordanian-style McCarthyism.

In their zealotry, the professional associations seem to have lost sight of a few basic principles: First, that Jordan is a democracy, peace is the law of the land, and accordingly each person has the right to pursue or reject normalisation; second, that slander is actually illegal under the penal code; third, that castigating an Arab Israeli working with a Palestinian theatre group serves neither the Palestinian cause in the region nor the Arab cause on the world stage; fourth, that a boycott, as we all know by now, is not a productive form of socio-political discussion; and finally, that the associations' mandates are to actually serve their professions, instead of hunting down "normalisers."

Perhaps the professional associations' latest activities are an expression, albeit an alarming one, of nostalgia for long-past glory days when they truly were influential and practised in the art of politics. But witch-hunting is not politicking. It is what it was in the United States in the 1950s: pure, destructive pettiness.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said the overwhelming vote of confidence for the government was expected, as Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is at the heart of parliamentary, political and party work. Also, most of the current ministers are "familiar faces," who have administrative experience and represent various areas of the Kingdom, added Rimawi. Rawabdeh's direct way of handling the country's problems and his keenness to launch a dialogue makes his government a model of a new democratic life, he said. The new government should be given enough time to achieve its pledges, in line with Rawabdeh's notable remark that the policy statement was only a statement of general intent and not an executive programme, said the writer. The vote of confidence given to the government was only the beginning, and it will be conditional upon many factors as the Cabinet's performance is monitored in its efforts to tackle vital issues like unemployment, poverty, water and public freedoms. Rimawi expressed his hope that the government will meet its declared objectives, especially since Rawabdeh is close to the public and is aware of the obstacles facing people in the streets.

Al Ra'i's Taher Adwan said all indications were that the improving relations between Amman and Damascus was a Syrian decision and a Jordanian desire. Although there are various analyses on the reasons behind the improvement of joint relations, it is wrong to say the reason is the absence of the late King Hussein, argued Adwan, though, of course, Syrian President Hafez Assad's participation at King Hussein's funeral helped open a new page in relations. Overcoming problems facing the success of such relations, will help shrink the distance between the two leaderships, according to Adwan. Arab peoples nowadays are aware of the importance of Arab cooperation to meet dangers and solve economic and developmental problems. Jordanians and Syrians feel that stable and strong relations based on mutual respect will help achieve common interests, said Adwan.



Truth is dying in the ruins of a silent capital

By Robert Fisk

IF THERE are lies, damned lies and statistics, the Kosovo war has now moved into damned lies.

Just a week ago, we had the Serbs claiming that the Albanians — far from being "ethnically cleansed" — were setting fire to their own homes.

Now we have NATO claiming that the Serbs of Pristina — far from being bombed by NATO — were blowing up their own homes. In the centre of this empty, silent city, you might be forgiven for thinking that the world has gone mad.

The Serbs are spending much of their time insisting that the tens of thousands of Albanians who have palpably disappeared from the capital of Kosovo are merely hiding from NATO bombs.

In which case, why is every house empty, every Albanian shop smashed and plundered and daubed with Serb graffiti? A Serbian woman crying yesterday in a Pristina cemetery hit by NATO on Wednesday in air strikes heavier than any before on the Kosovo capital — Vuk Brankovic.

Why did the fearful group of on-Serb refugees we saw at the disused railway tracks shamble in exhaustion and fear through the city, a mass of filthy clothes and old sacks and haggard faces, a live reenactment of Schindler's List? Why did lights still burn in broken homes, and front doors hang in the wind and why were the contents of the Albanian chemist's shop strewn over the pavement on the edge of town? Then we have NATO's brutal air raid on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning. It killed at least 10 civilians, it destroyed the post office, the largest bank in town and a whole row of civilian homes. One bomb crater had totally erased a single-storey house. At least two craters were 30-feet-deep and the bomb that hit the post office had brought part of the building crashing to the ground. When I talked to Serbs who live in the centre of Pristina — alone and in many cases almost too angry to speak to a citizen of a NATO country — they all gave detailed descriptions of the night of air raids.

When Valentina Jovanovic came to the door of her house in the capital, she was still in a state of shock, drawing heavily on a cigarette, her fingers shaking, as frightened of her own voice as she was angry to find an Englishman outside her home. "They bombed first at 11 o'clock. Then they came back at 1 o'clock. Then again at

three this morning. They bombed and bombed and bombed. Why?" A few hours later, Air Commodore David Wilby told a NATO briefing that in Pristina "NATO has certainly not caused the widespread and random damage, which we believe has been caused by Serb forces."

But while it is true that — at the start of its air bombardment — NATO attacked exclusively military targets, the American-European alliance is now hitting civilians. And I believe that Valentina Jovanovic was telling me the truth in Pristina. I do not believe Air Commodore Wilby was telling us the truth in Brussels.

Only aerial bombing could have pulverised the centre of the city in so shocking a way. Only missiles or air-fired ordnance could have gouged such craters into the ruins. No Serb — however devious — could have created this disgraceful scene in just a few hours, priming the entire Serb population of the area to tell every journalist an identical story.

Either NATO made a terrible mistake in Pristina or, egged on perhaps by its Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrilla allies, it committed a terrible deed. No wonder the Serbs — who brought journalists to Kosovo to see the ruins but allowed them to walk unaccompanied through this part of the town — were so willing to have this shameful scene filmed.

If ever the Serbs needed to find a reason for the Albanian exodus — other than the real reason which was no doubt murder and intimidation and dispossession — NATO has now provided them with it. "The loyal Albanians stayed, only the disloyal left," a middle-aged man explained on the Corso near the Grand Hotel in Pristina.

A likely story. Who, in heaven's name, are the loyal Albanians? The old man I found with a battered typewriter and a bag of dirty clothes hobbling past the post office, mumbling his desire to go to Skopje? The ghostly occupants of all those bombed homes east of Pristina? The phantom Albanians who, according to Serb city officials, will have to wait a few days to collect their pensions now that NATO has destroyed a local welfare office? What Albanian would ever choose to return here now? On the way to Pristina, amid the fields of vines and cherry trees and the blossom-smothered farmyards, the Serb tanks were hard to see. It took me all of five seconds to spot a T-72 in a farm scarcely 20-feet from me, so well had the hay and branches been piled around the tracks and bull. Only the end of

the gun barrel glinting in the late afternoon sun gave the game away. In one small village, the Yugoslav army had parked its trucks beside cottages, on lawns, alongside barns, within the first trees of a great forest. Every house has its tank. I thought.

And I doubted very much if the NATO pilots were going to winkle this lot out. In one great valley, it was only when I was travelling beside a river that I saw the anti-aircraft guns dug in beside the banks, barrels on a flat trajectory, camouflage netting pulled over ammunition bunkers. This was not an army that was ready to die. Yet by the time we reached Pristina, there was little to hide.

We overtook two T-72 tanks thrashing down the highway in clouds of brown dust past burned-out homes and shops, their crews — each man with his head encased in that Russian-style rubber helmet so familiar from every Soviet war film — giving us the three-fingered Serb victory sign. Trucks and jeeps and armoured vehicles hummed along the highway. The troops waved and shouted and, at one hillside bar where a platoon sat in the late afternoon drinking, a soldier pulled the opener on a beer can and sprayed the contents in a circle against the sunlight. We have won, the message meant. We have conquered. Kosovo is ours.

But is it? Every night, the local Serbs told us, the KLA came back. Every night there was shooting.

Over all of this scene of frightening desolation — the very emptiness a terrible witness to the suffering of the Albanians — hung thick clouds of black smoke. NATO had totally destroyed the oil plant outside Pristina. When I passed it, the 40-foot flames were so bright they hurt my eyes.

A direct hit. Like the NATO bombs that hit the very centre of Pristina.

The Serb version of a direct hit — and the exodus of Pristina's Albanian population is just that — is awesome and wicked. And NATO has — so far — killed only a fraction of the civilians whom the Serbs have mowed down. But it is now increasing its cull: the bombing of civilian homes at Aleksinac has now cost seven lives. Pristina's toll may reach twelve if two of the seriously wounded die. As the very same Air Commodore Wilby intoned a few days ago, "this is not a game of cricket." All too true — because there are fewer rules every day.

— The Independent

Letters to the editor

Our very own time zone

ON BEHALF of everyone (that I have recently spoken to) and myself, I would like to express my disappointment at the government's decision not to move the clocks forward this summer. I have scrutinised the merits of this decision time and again and I have yet to come up with a viable reason in support of such a move.

In retrospect, (and in addition to every child's perception of long summer days) the merits of longer daylight hours in the evening have their obvious advantages, of which, some are as follows:

First: It is a statistically proven fact that longer daylight hours in the evening are a large contributor to the reduction of road accidents.

Secondly: It is unquestionable that there are savings in energy through lower consumption in household electricity — hence the term "daylight savings."

Thirdly: We are a Middle Eastern country that should follow Middle Eastern time zones and not become a central European time zone (CET) country.

What the government has done is contradictory to the laws of time. For example, if we were to travel West, say to the West Bank, we would have to put our watches forward by one hour. Yet if we were to travel even further then we would have to put our watches back again. This basically defies the "theory" of time zones where we put our watches back when travelling West and forward when travelling East.

The only conclusion I have been able to come up with in support of not changing to summer time is that in line with new governmental measures to pull the country out of a recession, our government has decided on a new radical (and yet to be heard-of) monetary policy that can be basically summarised as follows: "Income generated by hospitals (due to a higher percentage of car accidents this summer) would be channelled from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Tourism in order to promote Jordan as a country entering the Millennium with its own time zone!"

I urge the government to reconsider its position and put the clocks forward now — as this government does not have any excesses in hard currency reserves to spend on energy fuels that will not be saved this summer by not putting the clocks forward.

Kamil Nader
Amman
(Independent Time Zone)
Jordan

A waste of time

I WAS reading your article "Daylight Savings: Blessing or Curse" (JT, March 25) on the Internet (I'm in Seattle, Washington). To say the least I was shocked, irritated and mostly confused by the government's decision to abolish it. I have several comments and questions.

Why was the Ministry of Energy wasting its energy and budget conducting this study in the first place? At least 70 other countries in the world observe daylight saving. Most of the remaining countries don't use this system because they are at lower altitudes so the daylight hours are similar during every season. It has been proven that energy use and the demand for electricity for lighting our homes is directly connected to when we go to bed and when we wake up. The odds of us being right in not using it (daylight saving) and the rest of the world wrong are pretty slim.

How could the ministry justify not using this system by saying we would only be saving less than one per cent in energy costs? Is the ministry's budget in such good shape that we're now aiming for savings that are over a certain percentage? The term "saving" means money saved. How could we not see this as something positive regardless of the amount?

The government's decision to adopt this policy could not have come at a more critical time. While the rest of the world is making the least amount of system and policy changes possible in preparation for Y2K and are spending resources figuring out how to make the Y2K transition as smooth as possible our Ministry of Energy is conducting a study about daylight saving. Does that mean that all the potential problems that we might be faced with on December 31, 1999 at midnight have been resolved and are planned for? Let's hope so.

Even if we were to ignore all the above isn't the simple fact that we all look forward to the longer days enough reason to keep it? More time for the kids to play outside and more time for families to do things together after work. We all love those longer warmer days. The government has decided to take one of the few free luxuries we have away because the savings aren't enough?

I suggest we do not waste our time reinventing the wheel on issues that have been extensively researched by others. All the information on daylight saving is just one click away... the Internet. I suggest the ministry utilise this valuable resource.

Lisa Ojib
Washington State
U.S.

Melissa's mayhem

A new era in computer viruses has been ushered in by Melissa

By Kurt Kleiner and Matt Walker

A NEW CHAPTER in the history of computer viruses has opened. For the first time, a rogue programme has taken full advantage of the Internet to infect tens of thousands of computers worldwide in just a few days. The virus, called Melissa, has already spawned several "copycat" programmes. Some experts fear that conventional countermeasures won't be able to blunt the threat posed by this new breed. "I would not be surprised if in a couple of months they figure out how to make a virus that propagates not in days, but in hours," says Steve White of IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center in Hawthorne, New York.

Melissa is a "macro" virus. These cause a disproportionate amount of havoc and exist as small programmes,

called macros, that can be added to documents created by software such as Word, Microsoft's word-processing package. As more than 100,000 computer users have already found to their cost, Melissa arrives by e-mail hidden within a Word file that contains a list of pornographic websites. If the recipient opens the document without disabling the macro function, the virus alters Word's security settings so that warnings about disabling macros won't be displayed in future — a trick that renders the user vulnerable to further attacks.

Melissa then looks for Microsoft's Outlook organiser programme and sends copies of itself to the first 50 contacts in the Outlook e-mail address book. At various times, it deposits a quote from The Simpsons TV show into Word documents.

Macro viruses that propagate by e-mail have been seen before. But

Systems hit by the virus reportedly included NATO computers involved in the war against Yugoslavia

Melissa is the first to use a popular e-mail programme to spread like wildfire. In doing so last week, it clogged major e-mail gateways. Systems hit by the virus reportedly included NATO computers involved in the war against

Yugoslavia.

A New Jersey man, Christopher Smith, has already been charged with releasing Melissa. But hard on its heels has come a virus called Papa, which lurks in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet file. It works in much the same way, except it also repeatedly tries to contact certain Internet addresses, effectively disabling the user's Net connection.

According to Nick Fitzgerald, an antivirus consultant based in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, there are two further copycats — Marauder and Syndicate.

Companies specialising in antivirus programmes have written software patches that disable Melissa and Papa, and made them available on their websites for downloading. But White and his colleagues at IBM argue that this approach is too slow to deal with fast-reproducing viruses.

IBM has pioneered the Digital Immune System, which it hopes to release in about a year. This will connect customers over the Net with a central computer. When a customer's computer detects an anomaly that might be a new virus, it will automatically ship the code to the central computer, which will figure out a way to detect it, then send the information to everyone on the network.

Some antivirus experts remain sceptical about the Digital Immune System's chances of success. But if it does work as advertised, it should be more than a match for Melissa and its imitators.

"Melissa and Papa are exactly the kind of things that would play to the immune system's strengths," says Fitzgerald. "It could detect and deal with fast-spreading network threats in real time."



Alleged Melissa virus creator Christopher Smith at the courthouse where he is being arraigned in Freehold, New Jersey (Reuters photo)

Tragedy of '48 through the eyes of ordinary Palestinians

"On the Hills of God"
Ibrahim Fawal
Black Belt Press, 1998,
JD12

IBRAHIM FAWAL is a professor of film and literature at the University of Alabama and has an academic and professional record in the field of filmmaking, which accounts for the remarkable cinematic narration in this book, which also happens to be his first novel.

"On the Hills of God" is probably the first novel that depicts the tragedy of the 1948 war from the Palestinian point of view. Fawal begins his story one year before the Zionist invasion in order to present a comprehensive overview of a fully functional and thriving Palestinian society, and to invalidate claims that the Zionist came to an unpopulated and arid land.

The story takes place in Adrallah, a small town where the majority are Christians cohabiting peacefully with Muslims and Jews. Fawal sees the development of the tragic situation through the eyes of Yousif, a Christian teenager and son of the town's most renowned doctor. Yousif lives in a happy and sheltered household, full of hopes to continue his education in the United States and to marry his beloved Salwa. In June 1947, however, Yousif encounters the first event that was to spell doom for his country; the U.N. resolution to partition Palestine.

At first, the people of Adrallah are sceptic and play down the grave impact of this resolution. Fawal draws a bitter parallel between their stance and that of Amin, Yousif's Muslim friend, who did not predict that his arm would be amputated because it was broken. No one ever predicted that they would be expelled from their homes as a result of the resolution.

From that point, Yousif witnesses a series of tragedies that shatter his dreams of success, putting him at the mercy of an international community that plotted against the Palestinian people and deprived them of the right to

determine their own fate.

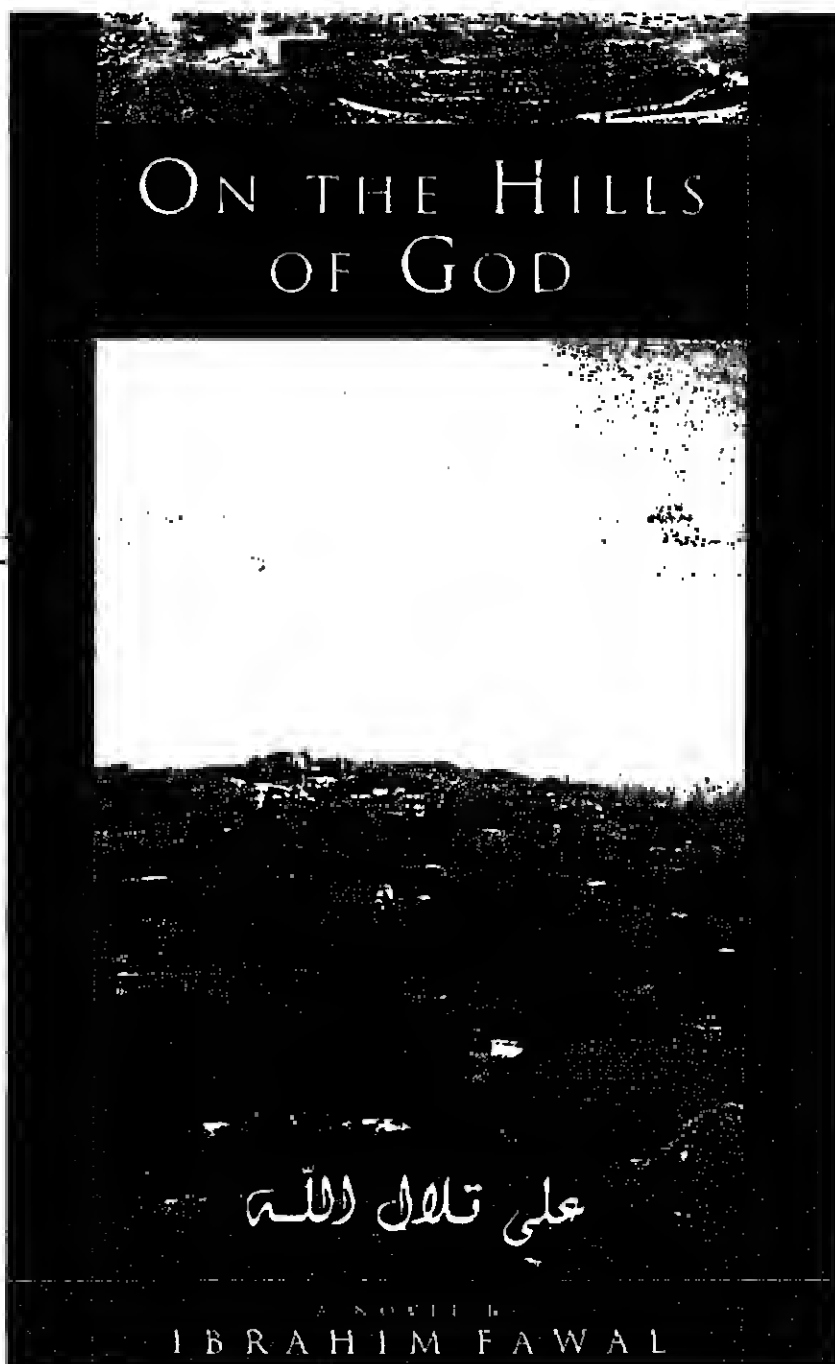
Fawal's treatment is very personal, yet he remains candid and fair. He did not only incriminate the international community; instead, he focused on the immediate friction that took place in Adrallah's society that turned against the Jewish inhabitants and against each other. Yousif's family represents the rare specimen that tried to preserve their pacifist values. Yousif's father refuses to donate money that was collected to build the first hospital in Adrallah to the fighters to buy arms. Instead of looking for other sources for funding, the town's people accuse him of stealing and channel all their efforts to force him to give them the money. Yousif is also the first to suggest that a delegation is sent to negotiate with the Zionists, but his ideas fall on deaf ears.

Despite all this, Fawal returns at the end of the novel to assert two important facts: Palestinians were scapegoats who never had the means to save their country, and the Zionists did not want a peaceful resolution but a complete evacuation of Palestine. Yousif finally reaches these conclusions a year after the resolution, on his first evening in Amman after he lost his home and Salwa, and vows to bring both of them back.

Fawal is a perfectionist. He takes his time in describing the events and sees their development through to the last detail. This is especially clear in the last two chapters where he literally journeys with the Palestinian deportees from their homes to the Jordanian borders, and describes even the most gruesome details: the rotting bodies, and the displaced people having to drink urine to stay alive. This novel has excellently preserved the detailed and intimate truth of the personal suffering of Palestinians; a truth which cannot be found in history books or other novels on the same topic.

The book was made available to the Jordan Times courtesy of the Philadelphia bookshop

Dima Hamdan



'Death on the Nile' runs foul of censors

By Hala Boncompagni
Agence France Presse

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S best-selling mystery "Death on the Nile" had a close shave last month from Egyptian censors amid a crackdown on hundreds of foreign and Arabic books here, publishers and book salesmen say.

They suspect the censors were responding to a taboo on religious and sexual matters in Egypt's conservative society, but complained they had received no guidelines or explanations.

Although "Death on the Nile" was eventually allowed to remain on the bookshelves, the decision to put the novel under censorship review stirred a mystery of its own.

"I can only guess that someone at the censor's office saw the Christie title and was concerned that it could be linked to Islamic militants," Michael Zaig, the booksop manager at American University in Cairo (AUC), told AFP.

The authorities may have feared the book's title recalled the spate of attacks on tourists in the 1990s, even though it is about European expatriates trying to solve a murder among their own on a Nile cruise decades ago.

Seventy other books were not so lucky and banned outright, AUC publishers said.

These include the Penguin English-language edition of the Koran, philosopher-poet Gibrán Khalil Gibrán's classic "The Prophet," romance writer Danielle Steele's book "Palomino" and Vladimir Nabokov's "Invitation of a Beheading."

Milan Kundera's "Unbearable Lightness of Being" was reviewed for nearly five months before the censors approved it Tuesday.

These works either focused on religion or sexual matters. Egyptian law prohibits publications that undermine religion, blaspheme Islam, harm government interests, or are sexually charged.

"All this is so frustrating because

we never really know why a book is called for review or even why it is banned. There are no guidelines," Zaig said.

AUC Press Director Mark Linz said the crackdown began after AUC, bowing to pressure from the national press, dropped French writer Maxime Rodinson's book "Mohammed," a biography of the Muslim prophet.

In December "Al Khubz Al Hafi" (For Bread Alone) by Moroccan author Mohammed Shukri was put aside after the AUC Arab Studies Department received anonymous complaints over the book's passages of explicitly sexual nature.

Linz said 450 books were requested for review in the past nine months.

Officials at the censor's office were unable to provide comment despite numerous phone calls from AFP seeking explanations.

Zaig and other book specialists in Egypt said that employees at the ministry of culture's censor office are not qualified enough to determine what books are "harmful" to Egypt's conservative society.

Egyptian publisher Mahdi Mustafa of Dar Sina publishing house blamed the book banning on a handful of "ignorant" individuals who lack the culture needed to appreciate the true wealth of books.

"There is no (organised official) censorship over books but there are individuals who volunteer complaints to the authorities like in the McCarthy era in the United States," said Mustafa.

The authorities then feel compelled to crack down.

More than 20 books published by Dar Sina have been banned by the authorities since 1978, including one by Cairo University Professor Hamed Abu Zeid criticising the laws of inheritance under Islam.

Abu Zeid was accused of apostasy and ordered by the Egyptian supreme court to divorce his wife for allegedly undermining Islam in his book. The couple have been living in exile in the Netherlands.

ABBA celebrates 25 years of disco magic

By Sarah Toms
Reuters

"WATERLOO" may have been the song that catapulted the Swedish band ABBA to international fame in 1974 when the super troupers won the Eurovision Song Contest — but now revival is "the name of the game."

Twenty five years and 350 million records later, ABBA has lost none of its disco magic. Although the four members went their separate ways in the early 1980s, their hits are never far from the dance floor and will soon be back on the shelves in a box set wrapping in 28 original A and B sides — all of their singles.

There is also a new stage production playing in London's West End that brings the band's songs to life.

The two-girl-two-boy band took the world by storm with "Waterloo" when they stepped onto the stage at the Brighton Dome in southern England in April 1974 in silver platform boots and shiny polyester outfits.

The intervening years have been kind to guitarist and songwriter Bjorn Ulvaeus. Bearded and a little heavier, his resemblance to co-writer Benny Andersson is even stronger than it was 25 years ago.

He still has fond memories of the start of ABBA's meteoric rise.

"The first is coming to Brighton and

'They burst onto the scene like an explosion in a polyester factory, reaching a new level of cool in the decade fashion forgot'

never having been there before and being photographed on the beach by a few Swedish papers only, thinking we only had the chance of perhaps becoming top 10 in the competition and dreaming about being in the top five because that would boost our careers," Bjorn said.

"We were a group from Sweden, a little known, but winning was absolutely amazing. Then the next day the first Rolls Royce came to pick us up to take us to Top of the Pops. That was great for this little Swedish group. I can tell you."

Both kitsch and camp, ABBA took its title from the names of its members — Agnetha was married to Bjorn and

Benny was married to Anni-Fryd. They burst onto the scene like an explosion in a polyester factory, reaching a new level of cool in the decade fashion forgot.

Bjorn, now dressed in a sedate black suit, couldn't have been further from the flares of yesteryear.

"We just wanted to be outrageous, that's all," he said. "We thought we had to be more outrageous than anyone else to be seen. There was never any plan that this was going to be our image, the kitsch, as we really suffered for that later on because we weren't taken seriously mainly for the fact that we were wearing such strange clothes," Bjorn says he

sometimes cringes when he thinks back on the outfits.

"It was fun — that's all it was. But then you look at the latter half of our career and we didn't look like that any more but people have forgotten that," he said.

Bjorn says it was the songs — and not the image — that have given ABBA its enduring legacy.

"The two girls together, Agnetha and Frida, have a unique sound. But also the fact that we had so many hits in the seventies, perhaps more than any group around that time, means that they live on and were taken as examples of the seventies all the time.



"If the group had one hit they couldn't revive it. So what they are reviving is a catalogue of songs. That's the only explanation I have... I'm just hoping that someone from outside will tell me why. No one has yet." The music goes on and on and on...

ABBA's sunny optimism has led to steady sales since 1974, including 15 million copies for 1992's "ABBA gold" alone. ABBA songs appeared on the soundtrack of two popular Australian films in the early nineties — "Muriel's Wedding" and "The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert."

There are numerous homages to ABBA — from tribute bands such as Australia's Bjorn Again and Sweden's arrival to Erasur's 1992 release "ABBAesque" and the bubblegum pop of Britain's steps, who on the eve of the Millennium are belting out seventies-style hits with a nineties tilt.

Bjorn says they are just paying their respects.

"I think it's strictly tribute — not parody as far as I'm concerned. I choose to see it that way, that they were brought up on ABBA and that they're doing this rather because they like us, more than that they want to do a parody," he said.

The group and the marriages split

about 17 years ago but fans still hold out for a reunion. Bjorn laughed when he was asked the inevitable question.

"I see it as highly unlikely but then again there might be something out there that might make us want to do it. But I just don't see what that would be," he said.

Frida had some singing success but now, married to a German prince, is an environmental activist. Agnetha, married several times, had brief fame with an acting and solo career in Sweden but now lives as a recluse on an island near Stockholm.

Although it looks unlikely that the band will get back together, the new stage production is doing its best to fill the gap. Benny and Bjorn, who worked together on Tim Rice's musical "Chess," have collaborated once again on "Mamma Mia."

The musical had its premiere on April 6 at London's Prince Edward Theatre.

Written by the award-winning playwright Catherine Johnson it uses the group's songs to tell the tale of the relationship between a mother and her daughter.

Johnson said writing a musical that would lend itself to the songs was no easy task.

"When I first started looking at the songs I was surprised at how much more profound the lyrics were than I remembered," she said.

European Union urges developing nations to keep up trade liberalisation efforts

Oil revenues plummeted 34.8 per cent leading the government to raise loans in the private sector including from banks. At the same time measures were taken to cut foreign payments and trim spending.

In December, Crown Prince Abdallah Ben Abdul Aziz warned "the age of abundance is over ... We must all get used to a new lifestyle that does not rely entirely on the state."

"Don't be put off by what's happening in the last couple of years," he said. "Put those things right but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. "Asia can take off again but this will crucially depend on the policies adopted by governments," he added. "It will not recover the growth rates of the past just by internal development. You have everything to gain from further liberalisation."

Brittan noted that the economic crisis had prompted some Asian countries to impose higher tariffs.

Malaysia has implemented a broad range of import restric-

tions including an across-the-board 1.5 percent rise in tariffs since October 1997, bringing its weighted average tariff to about 9.5 percent.

It has also set a high level of protection for the automobile industry through tariffs up to 300 per cent, import quotas, discriminatory excise taxes and local content requirements.

"We regret that and hope it will change," Brittan said.

The EU trade commissioner said the new round of WTO talks, known as the Millennium Round, was the best way to allow each country to pursue its priorities and balance its interests.

"We are talking years of talks. It's not instant liberalisation. The developing world has nothing to fear. It cannot be coerced. It has its own agenda to put on the table. There is no obligation to accept what you don't like," he stressed.

Trade ministers scheduled to meet in Seattle at the end of November are expected to launch the new round — the ninth since the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was set up after World War II. GATT gave way to the WTO in 1995.

In a speech at a luncheon hosted by the EU Business Council here, British warden

He said "Restrictions on other industries deny to domestic industry itself access to supply of low cost raw material but thereby enabling technological growth."

Britain said the new round of WTO talks would allow trade policies to move towards "gradual elimination of obstacles toward a various circle of mutual protectionism."

The EU was prepared to negotiate tariffs across the board in the new round without any "free-golf" areas, he added.

China, U.S. sign farm trade pact

The IADB responded to the crisis last year by increasing lending to the region to a record \$10 billion, including emergency loans granted to countries facing particular financial difficulties at a higher

Republic of China to the WTO in 1999," the statement said. "President Clinton And Premier Zhu instruct their trade ministers to continue bilateral negotiations in order to satisfactorily resolve the important remaining issues and reach agreement on strong commercial terms as soon as possible."

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman hailed the deal as "a fundamental breakthrough for American agriculture."

...China's agreement to

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MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN Dinar

CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN

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FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS

EXPORT/IMPORT PRICES

| CURRENCY | CMB | | | |
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| | 1\$ | 3\$ | 6\$ | 1 YBAR |
| US DOLLAR | 4.9520 | 4.8900 | 5.0200 | 5.8500 |
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| FRANCE FRANC | 0.1900 | 0.8500 |
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| WORLD STOCK MARKETS | | | | | PRECIOUS METALS | | |
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| LONDON | FTSE 100 | 6416.45 | 6416.45 | 37.50 | | | |
| NEW YORK | DJ INDUS. | 9290.31 | 9290.31 | 721.62 | | 8.97 | 8.98 |
| NEW YORK | NYSE COMPOSITE | 618.32 | 612.32 | 3.91 | | 328.20 | 327.95 |
| NEW YORK | AMEX COMPOSITE | 717.30 | 745.21 | 2.08 | | | |

Peanuts

I LIKE SITTING BEHIND YOU, LINUS...

I'M GLAD YOU HAVE NICE HAIR...

THANK YOU

AND YOU SMELL LIKE ERASERS...

Andy Capp

© 1998 KLUK LTD

NO! I'LL DO THE DANCING! WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU'RE SUPPOSE TO JUST DON'T MAKE SENSE.

THAT'S WHY, BUT YOU DON'T DANCE!

WELL, LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY.

SHADDAP!!

Mutt'n'Jeff

HOW'S OUR NEW STORE DOING, JEFF?

GREAT, MUTT! THE STORE IS PACKED WITH CUSTOMERS!

SOLD OUT?

YEAH, WE DIDN'T MAKE ANY MONEY, BUT WE DID AN AWFUL LOT OF BUSINESS!

BUT HOW?

I UNDER SOLD EVERYONE IN TOWN!

CLOSED OUT OF BUSINESS

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

Guss-Dergin

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1980 0522 7

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GRABE

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THACC

YEMMAH

NUBONI

Answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: GRIEF A FIRE PILLAR KNOCK
 Answer: Sought by airline passengers --
 A "FARE" DEAL

P.O. Box 6553, Amman-11115 Jordan

Divorced Agassi cruises into final with 'Boom boom' Becker

HONG KONG (AFP) — Tennis star Andre Agassi shrugged off the heartache of his divorce from wife Brooke Shields to power into the final of the \$350,000 Hong Kong Open here on Saturday where he will meet semi-retired veteran Boris Becker.

Agassi and actress-wife Shields filed for mutual divorce in Las Vegas this week.

But despite the upheaval in his personal life, Agassi stayed on course for his first tournament victory in 1999 with a straightforward 6-3, 6-0 victory over Germany's Hendrik Dreckmann.

"Yes, it is true that we have filed for divorce... and we are divorced. It is over," said Agassi when asked to confirm a statement released by the couple's Las Vegas publicist.

Agassi, who entered the Hong Kong tournament at the eleventh hour through a wild card, denied he came to Asia to get away from the pressures of the high-profile divorce.

"The divorce had nothing to do with my coming here. I needed to play more tennis. I will be going to Tokyo soon after this tournament to play in the Japan Open," said Agassi.

The American World No.



Andre Agassi of the United States looks up during his semi-final match against Hendrik Dreckmann of Germany at the Salem Open ATP tennis tournament in Hong Kong (Reuters photo)

Agassi started slowly in dropping his first service game, but was quickly back on track breaking his oppo-

nent in the third, fifth and ninth games to win the first set. He was unstoppable in the second set.

"I did not find my rhythm straight away. But I'm feeling really good. I'm moving well and hitting the ball well," said Agassi who will be playing his first ATP Tour final in 1999.

Becker hooked his berth with a 6-4, 6-4 win over compatriot Bernd Karbacher. The unheralded Karbacher, whose giant-killing feats knocked out second seed Patrick Rafter in the first round, had to answer to Becker's serve-and-volley game.

"My timing and rhythm is very good. I'm thrilled to be in the final," said Becker. His last tournament win was in 1996 when he won the Grand Slam Cup in Munich.

It will be the 14th time the pair have met — the last time being in the semi-finals of the 1995 U.S. Open when Agassi beat Becker in four sets. Agassi holds a 9-4 win record over Becker.

"It will be a great final. We can create another memory on court," said Agassi.

Becker added: "It is always special to play Andre. We have had a number of great matches in the past."

BobbyJo wins Grand National for Ireland

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — BobbyJo ran out a fairytale winner of the £245,588 (\$395,000) Grand National for Ireland at Aintree here on Saturday.

The well-backed 10-1 shot was trained by Tommy Carberry, who rode L'Escargot, the last horse to win the world famous steeplechase for the Emerald Isle back in 1975, and ridden by son Paul.

"Sure we're going to have a mild party for a year-and-a-half!" Carberry senior said afterwards.

The 25/1 shot Blue Charm, who led the field under jockey Lorcan Wyer for much of the four-and-a-half miles, put up a brave bid for Scotland in second 10 lengths behind with Call It A Day, 7/1, a ock away in third and Addington Boy fourth, a 10/1 shot.

Punters who had lumped on handicap good thing Double Thriller were dealt a cruel blow seconds after the start when the Cheltenham Gold Cup fourth parted company with jockey Joe Tizzard at the first fence.

While Double Thriller's connections were distraught BobbyJo's victory sparked joyous celebrations among the huge Irish contingent as the nine-year-old, successful in last year's Irish National, made his way back into the faded Aintree winner's enclosure.

Ridden to perfection BobbyJo was always well in contention, wrestling the lead from Blue Charm after the 30th and last fence.

Double Thriller apart there were relatively few casualties on the first circuit but that all changed at the fearsome Bechers' Brook second time round where Bedlam ensued with five fallers including the fancied Eudipe and Fiddling The Facts.

Jenny Pitman, saddling her last National runner before retirement from the training ranks, must have had high hopes of recording a third victory with Nahthen Lad, who was bang in the middle of the leading group and in with every chance until three from home until he faded to finish 11th.

Last year's winner Earth Summit found the good going too fast for him but ran on to the closing stages to finish eighth.

The result will have served to blot out the memory of Carberry senior's black National experience two years ago when his Rust Never Sleeps had to be put down after breaking a shoulder.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Gebrselassie given U.N. post

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Ethiopia's 10,000 metres Olympic champion Haile Gebrselassie has been named the United Nations goodwill ambassador for development in Ethiopia. The appointment, aimed at ridding his country of poverty, was reported here on Saturday in the Ethiopian Herald, a government newsletter. In March 25-year-old Gebrselassie, who holds the world outdoor records for 5,000 and 10,000 metres, confirmed his place as master of the boards when he took world indoor gold in the 1500 and 3000 metres in Japan.

Mijatovic to play today

MADRID (AFP) — Real Madrid's Yugoslav ace Predrag Mijatovic will be in the line-up for Sunday's Spanish league game against Celta Vigo, team coach John Toshack said here on Saturday. Mijatovic was earlier this week fined 5 million pesetas (\$35,000), the maximum fine allowed under club rules, for his refusal to play because of the Kosovo conflict. The Montenegrin was also warned that if he continues to refuse to play he may be thrown out of the team. Mijatovic, whose family lives in Belgrade, has missed two games for the world club champions. He said: "If I do not play, it's because I don't have the morale because I am not focused." The striker earned a place in Real Madrid folklore last year when he scored the winning goal in the Champions' League final win over Italian champions Juventus — the "meringue's" seventh European title and their first since their days of European dominance in the 1950s and 1960s.

Celtic into Scottish Cup final

GLASGOW (AFP) — Celtic reached the Scottish Cup final on Saturday when goals by Dutchman Regi Blinker and Australian Mark Viduka gave them a 2-0 semi-final win over Dundee United at Ibrox. Blinker scored a fine individual effort after half an hour to put Jozef Venglos's side in control and Viduka made the game safe before half-time with a second goal after 42 minutes. Celtic will play the winner of Sunday's other semi between Rangers and St Johnstone at Celtic Park.

Hands off Zidane, warn Juventus

TURIN (AFP) — Italian giants Juventus on Friday issued a "hands off" warning to Manchester United and other clubs hoping to sign French World Cup star Zinedine Zidane. Juventus director general Luciano Moggi said Zidane was not for sale at any price and was a key part of the club's plans for next season. Moggi told the ANSA news agency that no-one at the club had spoken with Manchester United chairman Martin Edwards about a possible deal involving Zidane, contrary to media reports. "We have not spoken to Edwards, although naturally we met at an official function when the clubs played in the European Cup semi-finals this week," said Moggi. "We haven't discussed anything about Zidane because he is one of the players on whom we are building our future. He is one of our key players for next season." Moggi pointed out that midfielder Zidane has a contract with Juventus that runs until 2004 and that the player has not expressed any desire to leave.

Wiat eases Nancy's relegation fears

NANCY (AFP) — Samuel Wiat earned 10-man Nancy a 1-0 win at home to Metz here on Friday in a French championship local derby. Wiat found the net two minutes from half-time following good work from Christophe Bastien and Republic of Ireland international Tony Cascarino. Nancy defender Mehdi Meniri was sent off for a foul just before the break but the home side held on. The win eased the threat of relegation, with Nancy moving up from fourth-from-bottom to seventh-from bottom in the table.

IOC ethics commission named

GENEVA (AFP) — The eight members of the new International Olympic Committee (IOC) ethics commission, which will act as a watchdog on IOC activities, were named in a press release from the organisation's Lausanne headquarters on Friday. The commission was set up in the wake of the Salt Lake City scandal, sparked late last year, where members were hired to vote for the U.S. city. The scandal eventually brought about six expulsions, four resignations and 10 IOC members being censured. The new commission comprises Keba Mbaye of Senegal, Australia's Kevin Gosper and Chiharu Igaya of Japan, all three IOC members, plus American former senator Howard Baker, French politician Robert Badinter, Peru's former secretary general of the United Nations Javier Perez de Cuellar, former Swiss confederation president Kurt Furgler, and Canadian Olympic athlete Charmaine Crooks, a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission.

Buzzer-beater lifts Pistons over Pacers

INDIANAPOLIS (R) — Lindsay Hunter's desperation 3-pointer at the buzzer gave the Detroit Pistons an improbable 102-101 victory over the first-place Indiana Pacers in a Central Division battle on Friday.

Rik Smits made a career-high 15 free throws, but the one he missed cost the Pacers the game. Smits went 15-of-16 from the foul line and scored a season-high 35 points.

"I really don't feel good about missing one of those free throws at the end," Smits said.

Grant Hill scored 30 points and Joe Dumars added 25 for the Pistons, who trailed 100-96 before Jud Buechler came off the bench and drained a 3-pointer with 6.2 seconds to play.

"We just kept our composure in the fourth quarter," said Hill. "It was a big game to come back in. Luckily, the ball bounced our way."

The Pacers watched Smits go to the line with a chance to increase the lead to three. But the 80 per cent foul shooter missed his first of the night before sinking the second to make it 101-99.

Hill received the inbound pass and made a mad dash up the right sideline before throwing a cross-court pass to Hunter, who released a high, arching leaper that banked in as time expired.

"Smits missing that last free throw was the break we needed," Hunter said. "I'm just glad we won. Indiana is a great team. Our last play was already set up."

Hunter, who scored 17 points, made the last of Detroit's 11 3-pointers, helping the Pistons pull into fourth place in the Eastern Conference, good for home court in the first round.

There were more last-second heroics in Charlotte, where Bobhy Philis hit a 16-foot jumper off an inbound pass with two-tenths of a second remaining as the Hornets pulled out a 90-88 victory over the slumping Washington Wizards.

Elden Campbell scored a season-high 32 points for Charlotte.

At Utah, Clifford Robinson committed an unthinkable foul on Karl Malone attempting an improbable three-pointer, and the mailman made all three free throws to lift the Jazz to a 93-92 victory over the Suns.

Chris Morris had appeared to hand a loss to his former team when he drained a 3-pointer from the right corner with 3.7 seconds remaining to make it 92-90.

"I come out early before anyone gets here and shoot 50-100 free throws before every game and just get into a rhythm because situations like that happen in the ballgame," said Malone, not known as a clutch foul shooter.

Phoenix had one desperation chance, but Jason Kidd's fallaway from the 3-point line missed at the buzzer.

In Vancouver, one night after bearing the league-best Portland Trail Blazers, the Seattle SuperSonics lost to one of the worst, falling 98-83 to the Grizzlies.

Shareef Abdur-Rahim scored 28 points and the Vancouver Grizzlies snapped a five-game losing streak.

In Atlanta, the desperate New York Knicks hit crucial jumpers and did not commit a turnover in the fourth quarter of an 86-78 victory over the Hawks.

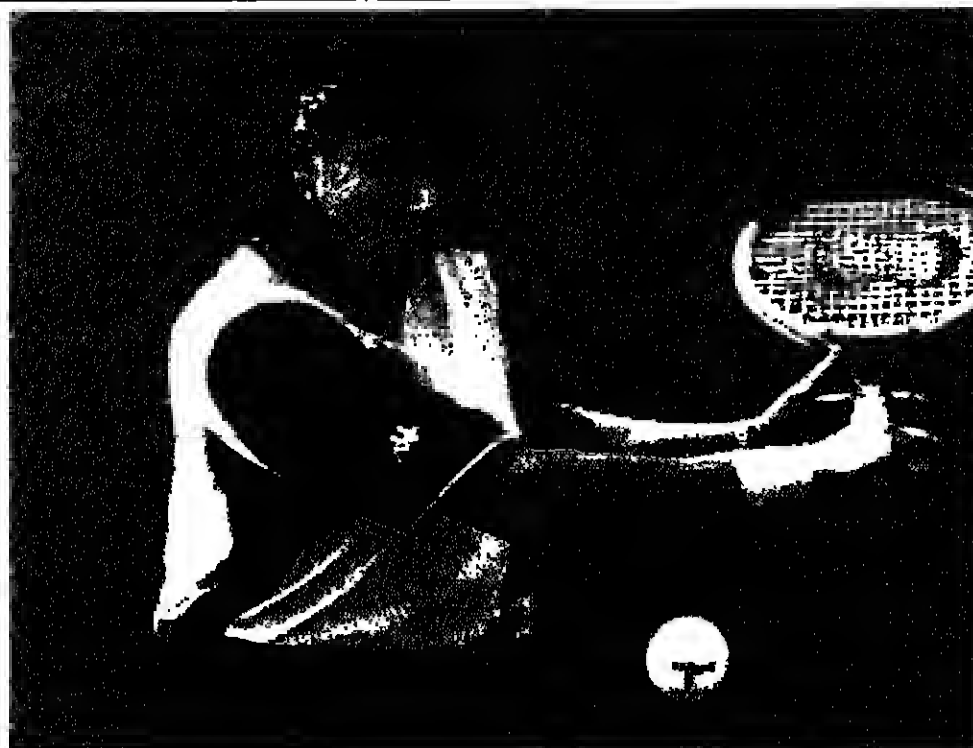
Patrick Ewing scored 16 points and Latrell Sprewell 18 for New York, which suffered an embarrassing 106-82 loss at Charlotte on Wednesday. The Knicks (19-17) moved a half-game ahead of Toronto for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot.

In New Jersey, Keith Van Horn scored 30 points as the Nets defeated the Toronto Raptors 106-99 for their fifth win in six games.

At Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal and Glen Rice each scored 25 points as the Lakers handed the Timberwolves their 10th straight loss at the Great Western Forum, 96-89.

In Orlando, Penny Hardaway had 26 points and nine rebounds and Darrell Armstrong added 18 points and seven assists as the East-leading Magic extended their win streak to a season-high six games, 95-83 over the Milwaukee Bucks.

In Boston, Allee Iversoo scored nine of his 23 points in the first quarter when the Philadelphia 76ers raced to a 14-point lead en route to an 83-67 rout of the Celtics, who were held to their lowest total of the season.



Conchita Martinez

Martinez ousts defending champion Pierce

AMELIA ISLAND (AFP) — Fifth seed Conchita Martinez of Spain rallied to dethrone No. 4 Mary Pierce of France while ninth seed Anna Kournikova of Russia had no trouble Friday in the quarter-finals of the WTA Tour's Bausch and Lomb Championships.

Martinez was on the brink of defeat, but won a second-set tiebreaker and dominated the third set in a 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 victory.

Kournikova wiped out Switzerland's Patty Schnyder, the sixth seed, 6-0, 6-2. In the day's other quarter-final match, Romania's Ruxandra Dragomir ousted Fabiola Zuluaga 6-3, 6-1. Zuluaga became the first Colombian — female or male — to make the quarter-finals of a major professional tennis tournament.

American Monica Seles, seeded second, will take on fifth seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa in the night match. Martioez awaits the winner, while Kournikova will meet Dragomir in the other semi-final on Saturday.

Martinez, who won here in 1995, is 5-6 all-time against Pierce, including 3-4 on clay. She handed Pierce only her fourth loss in 22 matches here and denied her a fourth straight trip to the finals. This was a rematch of the 1998 final.

Kournikova is 3-1 against Schnyder — all on clay — including a three-set triumph at Hiltop Head in the semifinals. Kournikova was coming off an upset of top-seeded Lindsay Davenport on Thursday.

In addition to that defeat, Schnyder was trying to avenge a loss to Kournikova in the round of 16 here last year. She was voted Most Improved Player by her WTA Tour peers last season.

Seles demolished Alexandra Fusai of France, 6-0, 6-1, to reach the quarter-finals. She has a 13-5 match record in 1999, including a 2-0 mark in quarter-finals, beating Steffi Graf to the Australian Open and Coetzer in the Pan Pacific Open. But Seles, who has 43 career titles, fell in the semi-finals on both occasions.

| Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre | | | | | | |
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| CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1' Steven Spielberg's ANTZ Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15 SAVING PRIVATE RYAN Show: 9:30 | CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2' Sophie Marceau ... in Leo Tolstoy's ANNA KARENINA Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 | CINEMA TEL:5699238 PLAZA Leonardo Di Caprio ... in TITANIC Shows: 12:15, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45 | CINEMA TEL:5677420 CONCORDE ALWAD MAHROUS BTA' AL WAZIR Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORDE 2 KISS THE GIRLS Shows: 3:30, 5:30 | CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Julia Roberts ...in STEPMOM Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 THE MAGIC SWORD Thursday and Friday mornings | CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan...in YOU'VE GOT M@IL Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45 RUSH HOUR Shows: 5:00 p.m. only | Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 The political satire AL SALAM AL Starting at 8:30 p.m. |

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

SCOREBOARD

NBA

| | | | |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Philadelphia | 83 | Boston | 67 |
| New York | 86 | Atlanta | 78 |
| Charlotte | 90 | Washington | 88 |
| New Jersey | 106 | Toronto | 99 |
| Orlando | 95 | Milwaukee | 83 |
| Detroit | 102 | Indiana | 101 |
| Utah | 93 | Phoenix | 92 |
| Vancouver | 98 | Seattle | 93 |
| LA Lakers | 96 | Minnesota | 89 |

National League

| | | | |
|---------------|----|--------------|---|
| Florida | 7 | Philadelphia | 4 |
| NY Mets | 10 | Montreal | 3 |
| Pittsburgh | 2 | Chicago Cubs | 1 |
| Atlanta | 3 | Arizona | 2 |
| Houston | 3 | Milwaukee | 2 |
| Cincinnati | 3 | St. Louis | 0 |
| Los Angeles | 9 | Colorado | 6 |
| San Francisco | 8 | San Diego | 3 |

American League

| | | | |
|-------------|----|---------------|---------------|
| NY Yankees | 12 | Detroit | 3 (7 Innings) |
| Kansas City | 10 | Chi White Sox | 5 |
| Toronto | 7 | Baltimore | 4 |
| Boston | 4 | Tampa Bay | 1 |
| Cleveland | 14 | Minnesota | 5 |
| Anaheim | 8 | Texas | 4 |
| Seattle | 6 | Oakland | 1 |

English Premiership

| | | | |
|---------------|---|--------------|---|
| Aston Villa | 3 | Southampton | 0 |
| Derby | 1 | Nott. Forest | 0 |
| Leicester | 0 | West Ham | 0 |
| Middlesbrough | 2 | Charlton | 0 |

Scottish Premiership

| | | | |
|------------|---|----------|---|
| Kilmarnock | 4 | Aberdeen | 2 |
| Motherwell | 1 | Dundee | 2 |

German League

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---------------|---|
| MSV Duisburg | 2 | Hamburg SV | 3 |
| SC Freiburg | 0 | Werder Bremen | 2 |

Dutch League

| | | | |
|------------------|---|---------------|---|
| Sparta Rotterdam | 0 | RKC Waalwijk | 1 |
| MVV Maastricht | 1 | PSV Eindhoven | 1 |

Austrian League

| | | | |
|------------|---|------------------|---|
| Sturn Graz | 5 | Austria Lustenau | 2 |
|------------|---|------------------|---|

Belgian League

| | | | |
|-----------|---|------------|---|
| Charleroi | 0 | Anderlecht | 2 |
|-----------|---|------------|---|

Belgian Cup

| | | | |
|------|---|--------|---|
| Genk | 2 | Lierse | 1 |
|------|---|--------|---|

French League

| | | | |
|-------|---|------|---|
| Nancy | 1 | Metz | 0 |
|-------|---|------|---|

Relegation woes continue for Southampton

LONDON (AFP) —

Southampton suffered their eighth successive away defeat when they lost 3-0 to Aston Villa at Villa Park on Saturday to remain second from bottom in the English Premiership and in serious danger of losing their battle against relegation.

Mark Draper, Julian Joachim and Dion Dublin scored for Villa, while Southampton had Dutchman Claus Lundekvam sent off before half-time.

Struggling Charlton, a point above Southampton, lost 2-0 away to Middlesbrough at the Riverside Stadium and stay fifth from bottom on 31 points but six points adrift of Coventry, one place above them on 37.

A late Horacio Carbonari goal saw Derby beat doomed Nottingham Forest 1-0 in the East Midlands derby at Pride Park. Both sides had a player sent off in the second half — goalkeeper Russell Hoult for Derby and captain Richard Gough for Forest.

Leicester and West Ham failed to find the net in a 0-0 draw at Filbert Street. Villa, whose most likely route to a UEFA Cup place is via the Intertoto cup this summer, notched up their first win in three months against struggling Southampton at Villa Park.

On Sunday, focus will be on the two FA cup semifinals with Manchester United locking horns with holders Arsenal at Villa Park and Newcastle United taking on League Cup winners Tottenham at Old Trafford.

In the English Premiership, third-placed Chelsea have the opportunity to close the gap to within two points of league leaders Manchester United when they visit Wimbledon at Selhurst Park.

Leeds, in fourth place on 57 points and just two points behind Chelsea having played a game more, play Liverpool at Elland Road on Monday.

Hakkinen fastest in Brazil practice

SAO PAULO (AFP) — World champion Mika Hakkinen's McLaren-Mercedes set the fastest time in Friday's rain-hit opening practice sessions for Sunday's Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos.

The Finn, who dominated last year's race weekend before sweeping to a second successive victory, finished just under half-a-second ahead of his rivals as he bids for a third straight triumph in the race.

Hakkinen clocked 1min 18.881sec at an average speed of 195.879kph as he finished ahead of his Scottish teammate David Coulthard.

"I'm very satisfied with the way things worked for us today despite the difficult conditions," Hakkinen said. "We are certainly very optimistic going into qualifying."

The Ferrari pair of Germany's Michael Schumacher and Ireland's Eddie Irvine were third and fourth fastest.

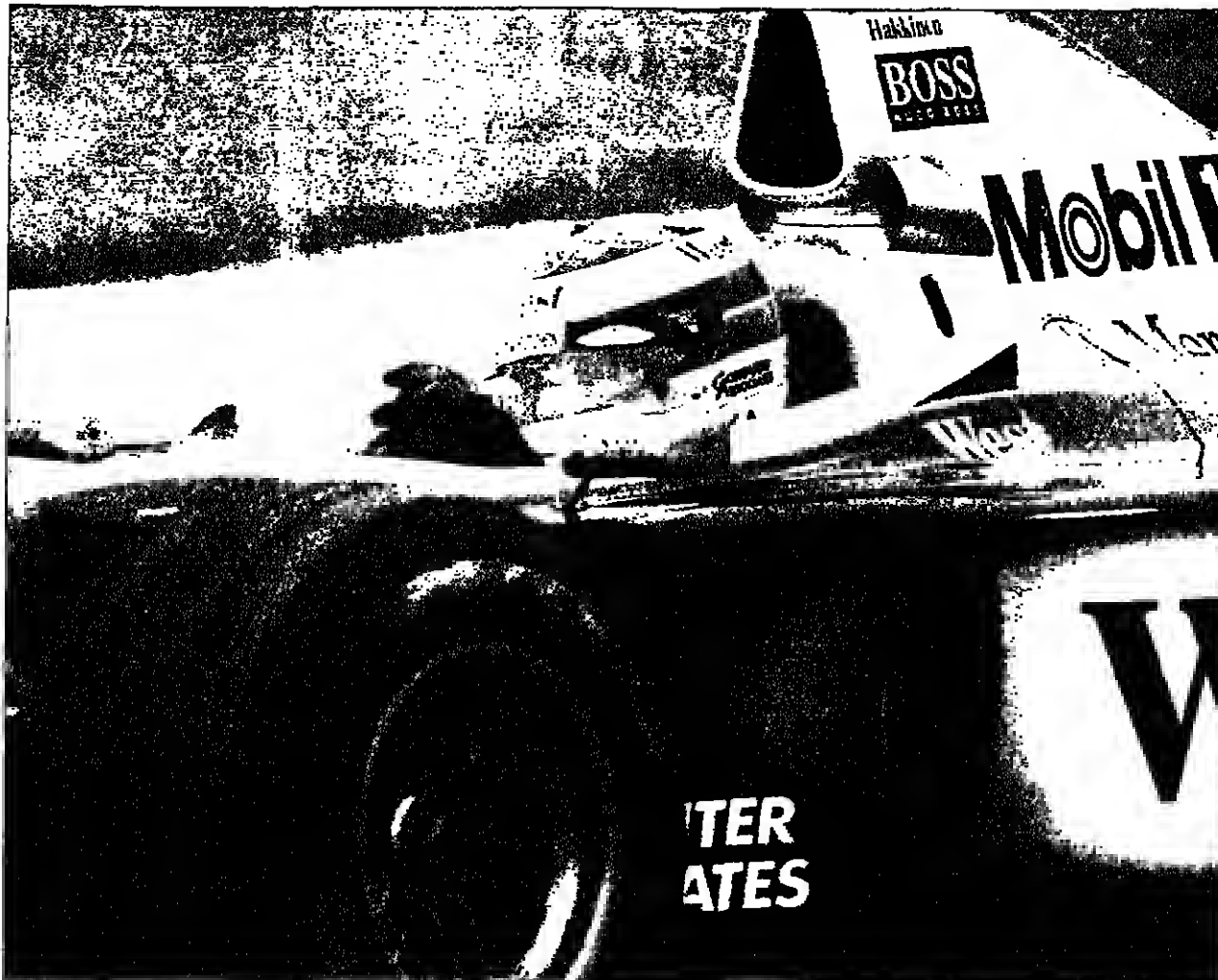
Schumacher was oozing confidence, saying his car was particularly impressive in the drier conditions.

Benetton's Giancarlo Fisichella was fifth quickest on a day when rain fell during both sessions, while local hero Rubens Barrichello maintained the promise he has shown for the Stewart team this year.

Barrichello, who was fifth in the season-opening Melbourne race despite starting from the pit-lane, clocked the sixth best time on his home track to underline the team's hopes of a podium finish.

"We made progress throughout the day and car performed well, even with a full fuel tank," Barrichello said.

Johnny Herbert, who made his grand prix debut in Brazil 10 years ago, was 13th quickest in the



Reigning Formula One world champion Mika Hakkinen powers his McLaren MP4/14 car during a free practice session in the rain at the Interlagos race track in Sao Paulo. Hakkinen finished the day in provisional first place, with the final time trials yet to be determined. The Brazilian Grand Prix will take place at the Interlagos circuit Sunday (Reuters photo)

other Stewart but former world champions Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve were the two slowest drivers after both were plagued by technical problems.

Qualifying is scheduled for Saturday ahead of Sunday's race.

The high placings for the two Ferraris showed Schumacher and Irvine on track despite an earlier spat between the pair.

Irishman Irvine, who won the season-opening race in Australia, said he believes he has a realistic chance of winning this season's drivers' title.

while Schumacher, the team's number one driver, said Irvine was being presumptuous.

"Ferrari want to win the drivers' championship and they believe Michael is their best chance and I can't argue with that," Irvine said.

"But if I can win on a few occasions and Michael has a few problems and talk about winning the championship," he said.

"If, after half the season the situation has continued, then it would be time to ask such a question."

but it was Lauda who won the championship. The fastest driver doesn't always win the title."

Schumacher, who limped home last in Melbourne after suffering from technical problems, dismissed his teammates' ambitions.

"After winning one grand prix it is a bit early to become philosophical and talk about winning the championship," he said.

"If, after half the season the situation has continued, then it would be time to ask such a question."

"The situation between us is the same as it was before the first race and I would be very surprised if it completely changed."

"I have had the upper hand so far and I have not seen a sign that I do not have it any more."

"It would need a lot of bad luck for me and Ferrari for it to change around and I cannot see me being that unlucky."

"But I am very happy to have him in my team because he can support the team very strongly."

"It was time for Eddie to win his first race because he has done a great job for the team over the last three years."

Indians pound Twins, Yankees crush Tigers; A's, White Sox lose

MINNEAPOLIS (R) — The Cleveland Indians arrived in Minnesota early Friday morning and opted not to take batting practice. They didn't need it.

The Indians collected 20 hits as Wil Cordero drove in four runs and Manny Ramirez and Jim Thome added three RBI apiece in a 14-5 rout of the twins.

Kenny Lofton went 4-for-5 and knocked in two runs for Cleveland, which has won its last three games by a combined 32-7 score.

"We got a lot of breaks tonight, a lot of balls we hit well fell in but we did hit some balls hard that fell in as well," Indians manager Mike Hargrove said.

"The guys have been getting on base that should get on base for the boomers. That sets up things nicely," Thome's mammoth two-run homer in the sixth inning off rookie Dan Perkins extended the lead to 12-2. His 16th career home run moved him past Ken Keltner into eighth place on the Indians' all-time list.

"I felt good tonight. I felt I waited on the ball very well and got some good pitches to hit," Thome said. "Hopefully, we won't take batting practice tomorrow." Charles Nagy (1-0) was the beneficiary, allowing four runs — three earned — and six hits over seven innings. He recorded his first win in six decisions at the Metrodome.

"I'm just glad to get that out of the way so I don't have to hear about it anymore," Nagy said about his record at the Metrodome. "I've been coming here for nine years. I've pitched some pretty good games but just didn't win."

"We have had a lineup

like that for five to six years so it is no secret that they can hit. As a pitcher, you just go out there and do your job."

In New York, the Yankees welcomed back a legend, remembered another and celebrated one of the greatest seasons in baseball history before doing what they do best — win.

Chili Davis belted his eighth career Grand Slam and David Cone carried a no-hitter into the sixth inning as New York hurled the Detroit Tigers 12-3 on opening day at Yankee stadium.

The game was called in the top of the seventh after a rain delay of more than an hour.

Hall of famer Yogi Berra, at the stadium for the first time since he was fired as Yankees Manager

in 1985, threw out the ceremonial first pitch to seal his reconciliation with owner George Steinbrenner.

Before the game, there was a moment of silence for hall of famer Joe Dimaggio, who died March 8 at age 84 after a long bout with lung cancer and pneumonia.

Two other New York hall of famers — Phil Rizzuto and Whitey Ford — raised a world series championship banner near Monument Park Beyond the left-center-field wall. Last year, the Yankees set an American League record with 114 regular-season wins before claiming their 24th crown.

At Tampa Bay, Mark Portugal returned to the American league and allowed three singles over 6 1/3 scoreless innings as

the Boston Red Sox spoiled the home opener of the Devil Rays, 4-1.

Portugal, who last pitched in the junior circuit in 1988, walked two and struck out three. Mark Guthrie tossed 1 2/3 scoreless innings before Derek Lowe allowed a solo homer in the ninth to Fred McGriff. The Red Sox improved to 4-0 and are the American League's lone unbeaten team.

In Chicago, Mike Sweeney doubled twice and homered and the Kansas City Royals capitalized on three fifth-

inning errors by Mike Siroka to spoil the home opener of the White Sox, 10-5.

Scott Leius had a three-run homer for the Royals in support of Brian Barber, who allowed three runs over five innings.

Siroka (0-1) allowed nine runs — three earned — and nine hits in five innings. His three errors in one inning tied the American League record for miscues in an inning by a pitcher, set by the Yankees' Tommy John on July 27, 1988.

In Seattle, making his

first appearance since April 20, 1998, after surgery for a torn knee ligament, Butch Henry allowed just an unearned run and two hits over seven innings as the Mariners defeated the Oakland A's 6-1.

Edgar Martinez hit a three-run homer for Seattle in the first.

At Texas, Orlando Palmeiro led off the game with a homer and the Anaheim Angels went on to an 8-4 win over the Rangers.

Chuck Finley tossed six effective innings to snap a

personal nine-game losing streak against Texas.

Todd Greene, Troy Glaus and Tim Salmon each drove in two runs for the Angels, who recorded five doubles and three homers among their 12 hits.

In Baltimore, Shannon Stewart homered on the fifth pitch of the game and went on to score three runs as the Toronto Blue Jays outlasted a 95-minute rain delay and handed the Orioles their third straight loss, 7-4.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TANNIAH HIRSCH
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SOMETHING NEW

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| | |
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| ♥ 10 3 | ♥ 9 4 2 |
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| WEST | SOUTH |
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The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1NT Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Six of ♣

"The Bridge World," founded by Ely Culbertson in October 1929, is the world's oldest continuously published bridge magazine. In that time, it has had only five editors! First was the founder, followed by Albert Marchand, Alphonse Moyse, Jr.,

Edgar Kaplan and now Jeff Rubens. If there has been any complaint about the magazine, it was that too much space was devoted to high-level bridge and not enough for the average player. This has now been remedied by the addition of a new section, titled "Bridgeworlds," devoted to any player who is seeking to improve his game, so increasing the magazine's appeal. (Annual subscription \$52; call 800-366-1939.) This is the sort of hand you might find, culled from the magazine's March 1993 issue.

North-South arrive quickly at three no trump and West leads a fourth-best heart. With eight tricks available once the ace of hearts is forced out, declarer will have to rely on a second club trick for the contract. That needs only to find West with either the king or jack of clubs.

Declarer wins the first trick and immediately leads a club to the eight. Losing to East's jack. Back comes a heart, and West must allow declarer to win the trick! Now when South takes a second club finesse, East can win and perish with a third heart, and West collects three heart tricks to sink an excellent game.

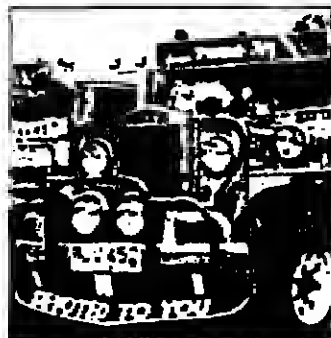
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UNSCOM says Iraq submitted new data on germ warfare

UNITED NATIONS (R) — As the U.N. Security Council debates its future policy towards Iraq, the chief weapons inspector told members Baghdad had only recently revealed some data on its past germ warfare programme.

In a report circulated late on Friday, Richard Butler, head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), accused Iraq of withholding documents and not declaring dual-use material, such as growth media that can be used to produce biological agents.

Arms experts have long feared that Iraq had obfuscated its biological weapons programme, which was established in 1975 and had produced such deadly toxins as anthrax.

The new report said Iraq had volunteered new information to the council in a February paper "in which it has revised its previous statements on the material balance of growth media."

But the report did not give details or evaluate the significance of the disclosure except to say that U.N. inspectors in December had discovered "dual-use material such as growth media which had not been declared by Iraq."

UNSCOM spokesman Ewen Buchanan said the gap

in information was evident even while the Security Council was discussing a new arms system to monitor Iraq's potential nuclear, ballistic, chemical and biological arms.

"The persistent finding over several years of undeclared equipment and material obviously raises some concern about Iraq's commitment to the implementation of a monitoring plan and we want to alert the council to this," he said.

Iraq, which says it has no more weapons of mass destruction, insists on the lifting of stringent U.N. sanctions, imposed when it invaded Kuwait in August 1990. They are linked to the elimination of its dangerous weapons.

The new report will be considered by the council late next week. Butler is expected to attend the session after Russia barred him from Wednesday's consultations.

But Moscow's U.N. ambassador, Sergei Lavrov, who wants Butler dismissed and UNSCOM abolished, told reporters: "I don't care about this report at all. I don't care about UNSCOM."

"What is UNSCOM? What are they about to report? How they were spending the last months after December doing nothing in this building? It's a

joke," he said.

The council is considering reports from three panels it established on how to monitor Iraq's arms potential, improve hardships for ordinary Iraqis and account for missing Kuwaitis and Kuwaiti property.

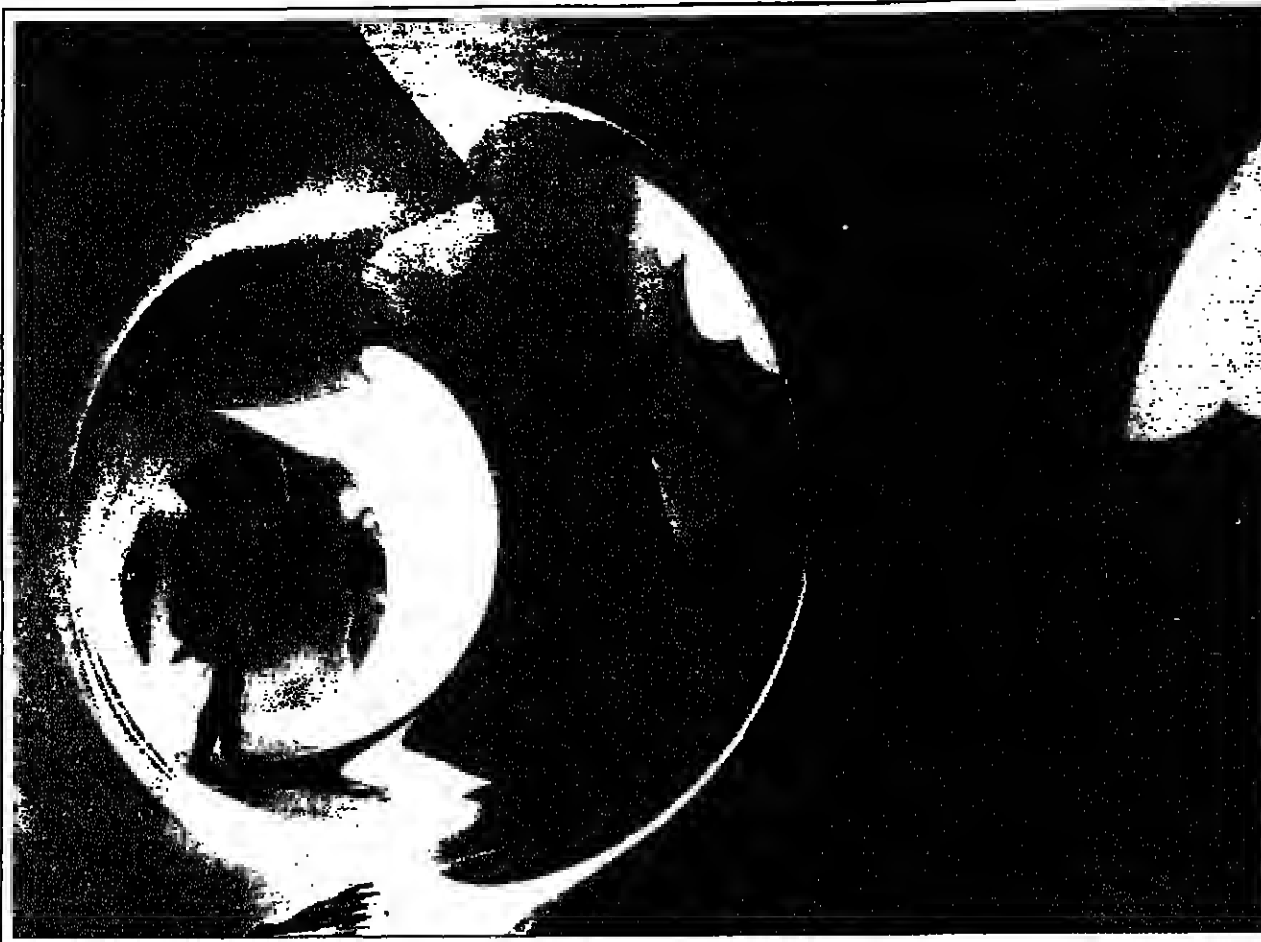
But there are few signs members were moving towards a solution. Russia, China and France want the sanctions greatly reduced or lifted entirely as an inducement for Iraq to allow arms inspectors back into the country. The United States and Britain oppose this.

Other members, such as Canada, favour some sanctions relief, saying the panels' proposals should be instituted.

The disarmament panel concluded that the "bulk" of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction had been dismantled and said remaining issues could be resolved under a monitoring system provided it included on-site inspections.

The panel on humanitarian issues suggested easing but not lifting economic sanctions by allowing foreign investments in its oil industry and some agriculture export commodities.

Iraq has attacked the reports, saying they put new labels on old discredited policies.



LABYRINTH IN DRESDEN: A girl walks through an exhibition called 'Wonderful World' in Dresden on Saturday. Visitors walk through a labyrinth of tunnels and domes made of synthetic material surrounded with music and different fragrances. The 'aerial sculpture' is made by British artist Alan Parkinson (Reuters photo)

54 killed in military operation near Turkish-Iraqi border against PKK

ANKARA (AFP) — A five-day Turkish military operation near Turkey's border with Iraq against the banned Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) has claimed 54 lives, the Turkish general staff said in a statement on Saturday.

"At the end of an operation carried out by our security forces between April 5-9 in an area neighbouring the Turkish-Iraqi border, 44 terrorists were killed and 15 others were captured," the army statement said.

The clashes also claimed the lives of 10 Turkish soldiers, it added.

It said several rounds of ammunition and arms as well as two surface-to-air SA-7

missiles had been seized in the operation area.

The statement did not specify on which side of the border the operation had taken place, but security sources in the southeastern Turkish province of Diyarbakir said on condition of anonymity that the clashes took place in Hakkari and Hasani regions of northern Iraq.

Meanwhile, the German-based Kurdish news agency DEM said in a statement received in Ankara that the operation had claimed the lives of 25 Turkish soldiers and three fighters of Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (PKK), which provided support to the

Turkish army.

It quoted the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARGL), the PKK's armed wing, as saying that one PKK rebel was killed in clashes in Hakkari.

DEM added that some 40,000 troops had participated in the incursion, most of whom had withdrawn.

Turkish press had reported earlier in the week that some 15,000 Turkish troops, accompanied by 2,000 Kurdish village guards loyal to the state, had poured into the Kurdish-held enclave and penetrated some 15 kilometres into the region.

Turkey has carried out several incursions into northern

Iraq in its struggle with the PKK which has been fighting for Kurdish autonomy on Turkish territory since 1984. Violence connected to the conflict has claimed almost 31,000 lives.

Turkey believes that the power vacuum in northern Iraq, which has been outside Baghdad's control since the end of the 1991 Gulf War, facilitates Kurdish rebel attacks on its territory.

Baghdad denounces Turkish military operations in the area as a violation of its territorial integrity, but Turkish officials maintain that the army is obliged to use its "right to hot pursuit against PKK elements penetrating from the area."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Activists rebuild Arab house

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli peace activists and Palestinians Saturday began rebuilding for the second time a house that was twice torn down by the Israeli military in the West Bank Palestinian village of Anata. "We began the reconstruction work, and we will come back to continue it," said Yoav Hass of the Israeli Committee Against the Demolition of Houses. Israeli police watched them work without intervening, he said. A family of eight lived in the home, northeast of Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the army in July then again in August after it was rebuilt by the committee. "We will continue to rebuild the house, even if they tear it down again," owner Salim Shawarma said, adding that "there is no other solution." Israel demolishes homes that have been built without permits by Palestinians in areas of the West Bank that are under its control and has torn down 40 dwellings since the beginning of 1999.

'Iran will continue to back Palestinians'

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told a visiting Palestinian official on Saturday that his country would continue to support Palestinians in their struggle against Israel. Kharrazi told Farouq Qaddoumi, head of the political department of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), that Iran was determined in its support for the struggle of the Palestinian people. "Despite all pressures, [Iran] is firm in its support for the Palestinian ideal," the official Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Kharrazi as saying. Iran does not recognise Israel and has condemned the Middle East peace process as a sell-out of Palestinian rights. Relations with the Palestinian National Authority were soured last year when Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei launched a vitriolic personal attack against Palestinian President Yasser Arafat for signing the U.S.-sponsored Wye Plantation accord with the Israelis.

Saudi to send dates to Kosovo refugees

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia on Saturday said it would send 2,000 tonnes of dates to the Kosovo refugees, the official SPA news agency reported. Last week, Saudi Arabia sent two plane-loads of food, tents and blankets to the refugees and condemned "the collective punishment, the ethnic cleansing, the deportation and massacre of hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Muslims." The Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development estimates that in 1995 the six Gulf Arab states had about 30 million palm trees between them, mostly in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran facing worst drought in 30 years

TEHRAN (R) — Iran is facing its worst water shortage in three decades because of insufficient rainfall with the problem mainly threatening agricultural development, the official IRNA news agency reported on Saturday. Quoting Agriculture Minister Issa Kalantari, IRNA said the country was presently short of 1.2 billion cubic metres of water for farming. Kalantari urged farmers to rationalise water consumption and dig wells to make up for rainfall shortage. He said dry farming lands in the northwestern province of Ardebil, which depend on rainwater, had been completely destroyed. The minister said the Sefidroud and Aras dams in northern Iran contained only 30 to 60 per cent of their capacities. Iran's northern provinces, some of them bordering the Caspian Sea, are usually well-watered and humid, producing much of the country's wheat, rice and citrus fruits. Officials, who said the shortage was the worst in 30 years, have warned of severe shortages in Tehran for the summer months beginning in June.

'Sudan suspends talks with rebels'

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's Islamist government has suspended peace talks with the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) over the deaths of four Sudanese captured by the SPLA, a Khartoum newspaper reported on Saturday. "Retired Major General Hassan Dhahawi, state minister at the social planning ministry, has announced the freezing of all peace talks with the rebel movement through IGAD [the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development]," the privately-owned Al Rai Al Akher daily said. The government has not formally announced it was suspending the talks and official media did not carry Dhahawi's remarks. IGAD is an east African regional grouping that has been mediating in Sudan's 16-year-old civil war. The next round of peace talks under IGAD auspices had been scheduled to take place on April 30 in the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

'Iranian cartoonist may face court for drawing'

TEHRAN (R) — A teenage cartoonist could be prosecuted in Iran for a drawing that allegedly insulted the country's Islamic laws and was in part responsible for the closing of a newspaper, reports said on Saturday.

An Islamic revolutionary court ordered the daily Zan closed on Tuesday after it had published the cartoon, as well as an Iranian new year greeting from the wife of Iran's former shah.

The court summoned editor Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and told her to bring the young cartoonist with her, or he would be formally summoned, the newspaper Neshar said.

Hashemi insisted she alone was legally responsible for her paper's contents and 17-year-old Davood Ahmadi Mounes had merely drawn what he had been told, another daily, Khorad, reported.

The cartoon shows a thief holding a couple at gunpoint. The husband advises the gunman to shoot his wife as he would have to pay less blood money.

Under Islamic law enshrined after the 1979 revolution, relatives of a murdered woman receive only half the amount of blood money as is paid for a male victim. The money is paid in return for the family's forgiveness.

This is the second time the newspaper, which targets women and young readers, has been ordered closed. Last year, publication was suspended after a court convicted it of defaming a politician.

German imprisoned in Iran expected to be released on bail

TEHRAN (AFP) — A top German envoy arrived here Saturday for talks with Iranian officials after the lawyer for a German businessman facing the death penalty said his client had been granted bail, Iranian officials said.

Chancellor Minister Bodo Hombach is scheduled to meet President Mohammad Khatami Sunday, sources from the presidential office said.

The German envoy is also due to hold talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and First Vice President Hassan Habibi.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder appointed Hombach in November as his special envoy in the case of 57-year-old German businessman Helmut Hofer, who was sentenced to death last year for an alleged relationship with an Iranian woman, in violation of a law banning relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

His visit comes two days after Hofer's lawyer, Hushang Ghahari, announced that a court had agreed to release his client "provisionally."

"We will pay bail on Saturday or Sunday to get him released," Ghahari said, adding that the case was finally "coming to an end."

"Tehran and Bonn are determined to break all barriers and resume an expansion of our friendly ties," Hombach told the official news agency IRNA

on his arrival at the capital's Mehrabad international airport.

"The good relations between Iran and Germany will contribute to an improvement of Iran's relations with the European Union," he said.

"I have been assigned by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to convey his greetings to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and extend his official invitation to visit Germany," Hombach added.

The head of Khatami's office, Mohammad Ali Abtahi, who welcomed Hombach at the airport, said he hoped the visit would be "a major step in improving relations between Tehran and Bonn."

The German envoy's visit is being seen as a first sign of improvement in ties between Tehran and Bonn, Iran's largest European trading partner.

Hombach had been due to visit Tehran to deliver the invitation for Khatami to visit Germany late last year, but the visit was cancelled after Iranian officials reacted angrily to German calls for "greater clarity" over the Hofer case as a precondition for the visit.

Hofer has repeatedly denied having a relationship with the woman, a 26-year-old Iranian medical student identified only as Vahideh G., who was arrested at Tehran airport with him and later sentenced to 100 lashes.

Ocalan calls for 'peace measures' to end armed conflict

ANKARA (AFP) — Jailed Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan on Saturday called on Ankara to introduce measures for a "peaceful solution" to Kurdish problem to end a 15-year armed conflict between his rebels and Turkish forces.

In a statement released by his lawyers, Ocalan said such measures by the state, "including an amnesty," could form the basis to "permanently end armed clashes."

He added that the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) which he heads should "prepare itself to become legal" once Ankara "agrees to a democratic solution and guarantees Kurds' freedom of speech."

International organisations could monitor an eventual peace process between the government and the PKK.

A ceasefire the PKK proclaimed in September 1998 was still valid and should be observed by both parties, he said. Despite the ceasefire, the rebels are thought to be behind a wave of lethal bomb attacks since Ocalan's capture in February.

The 1998 offer was rejected by Turkish authorities as were two other ceasefires declared in 1993 and 1995.

Almost 31,000 people have been killed since the PKK launched an armed campaign for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey's southeastern region, which is mainly populated by

Kurds, in 1984.

Ankara, which keeps a heavy military presence in the area, regards the PKK as a "terrorist group" and refuses outright to negotiate with it.

"Ocalan told us this is a general framework that could be detailed out in the future for a lasting, democratic and peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem," Mahmoud Sakar, the lawyer who signed the statement, told AFP on the telephone.

As Ocalan's statement was being released, his rebels kidnapped a parliamentary candidate of the conservative Motherland Party along with his brother in the southeastern Anatolian province of Hakkari bordering Iran.

The Turkish media said on Saturday that Osman Dara was in his home village near the town of Yuksekova when PKK rebels, armed with hand grenades and rifles, raided his house late Friday.

The rebels fled towards Turkey's border with Iran after taking Dara, his brother Izzet, and two nephews with them.

The nephews were released before the group crossed into Iran.

Another candidate from Hakkari, Macit Firuzbeyoglu, told the NTV news channel that the rebels were aiming to prevent Motherland candidates from running in the upcoming April 18 elections.



Pilot threatened by angry passengers

MADRID (AFP) — Members of the Spanish Civil Guard were forced to board an Iberian Airlines flight here to calm outraged passengers during a three-hour take-off delay, the daily El Pais reported Saturday. The daily said passengers were furious after the pilot refused to let them off the plane during a three-hour wait for authorisation to take off. The Airbus A300 was to have left Madrid on Thursday at 8:30 p.m. (1830 GMT), headed for Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. But after waiting for two hours on the runway, the 268 passengers lost their cool. The captain was forced to barricade himself in the cockpit to escape the fury of travellers, who threatened him physically and threatened to file a complaint if he did not open the doors immediately and let them disembark. El Pais said.

You want fries with that?

NOVATO (R) — The night manager of a Marin County Burger King was arrested for allegedly using the drive-through window to sell an item definitely not on the menu — cocaine. Lt. Dennis McQueeney of the sheriff's department in Marin County, just north of San Francisco, said that Sadiq Sufi was arrested after undercover officers observed drive-through drug sales taking place. "He'd put [the cocaine packet] in a cup of ice and hand it out," McQueeney said. "Some people clearly chose to get a hamburger while they were at it."

Beaver nabbed in cherry-tree felling

WASHINGTON (R) — As beavermania swept across Washington, one of a pair of elusive furry criminals munching their way through the capital's prized flowering cherry trees wound up behind bars Friday. A professional trapping service brought in by the National Park Service to nab the toothy bandits bagged its first beaver late in the evening, park officials said. The animal will be released somewhere in the wild where its tree-felling and dam-building handiwork will be less of a nuisance, they said.

Kidnappers offer apology for mistake

CALCUTTA (R) — An Indian businessman freed by kidnappers said his prayers had worked miraculously to secure his release. But it also helped that the abductors had got the wrong man. Satya Brata Ganguly, chief executive of battery maker Exide Industries, showed up at home a week after he was kidnapped. He was blindfolded and taken to "the boss," who said: "Mr. Ganguly, I am very, very sorry that we have picked up you instead of somebody else. It is our mistake. We apologise for that. I can assure you that we will not take [any money] from you or your family and I will release you." Ganguly said he was offered food and medicine and put on a train home to Calcutta.

'Dumb blonde' stereotype alive

LONDON (AFP) — The stereotype of platinum blondes as "dumb" is just as common at the end of this century as four decades ago, psychologists say. Women with blonde hair — either natural or straight from a bottle — are generally seen as having more fun and being more popular, according to tests conducted by researchers. Author Tony Cassidy and his team asked 60 men and 60 women to study head-and-shoulder shots of a 21-year-old female model wearing four different wigs depicting her as a redhead, brunette, natural blonde and platinum blonde. Using a point scale, they were asked to rate the person in the picture for intelligence, shyness, aggression, tamperance and popularity. "What we found was that the platinum blonde was rated significantly less intelligent than the other three by both males and females," Cassidy said.

U.S. jets fired on, attack Iraqi air defence site

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. warplanes on Saturday attacked an Iraqi air defence site in the southern no-fly zone after being fired upon, and returned safely to their bases, a U.S. Defence Department spokesman said.

Air Force Lt. Col. Mark Samisch, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida, which oversees U.S. forces in the Gulf, said the incident took place at about 2:30 a.m. EDT (0630 GMT) after U.S. F-16 jets were fired on by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile battery.

"Coalition F-16 CG Fighting Falcons

were illuminated by Iraqi missile guidance systems and subsequently were fired upon by an Iraqi surface-to-air missile about 160 km south of Baghdad," Samisch said.

"The F-16s responded by returning fire at the radar systems and at the surface-to-air missile site. We don't have any battle damage assessment yet," he said. "The planes have all returned safely."

U.S. Navy planes on Thursday struck a missile site in southern Iraq which the United States said posed a danger to ships in the Gulf.

The United States has been policing no-fly zones in south and north Iraq since shortly after the 1991 Gulf War to protect minority groups from President Saddam's forces and avert any military threat to Iraq's neighbours. Baghdad does not recognise the zones.

A sustained campaign of air attacks by U.S. and British planes on Iraqi air defence targets in the zones began last December after the flights came under repeated ground attack.

"This is the latest of nearly 160 Iraqi provocations in the southern no-fly zone

since Operation Desert Fox," U.S. Central Command said in a statement posted on its web site.

"Coalition pilots have taken appropriate actions to defend themselves, and they will continue to defend themselves by targeting Iraq's air defence network as long as it threatens coalition planes or forces in the region."

Iraq said earlier on Saturday Western warplanes had breached its air space in the south, but air defences had forced them to return to bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.